

2dartist

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135

Issue 135 | March 2017



Inside:

- Creating sci-fi worlds
- **Dynamic character portraits**
- Expressive mixed media illustrations
- **Nature inspired fantasy sketches**
- Speed paint an animal mech
- **and much more!**

Editor's Letter



ANNIE MOSS
Editor









**2dartist is now on
Instagram!**

Welcome to 2dartist issue 135!

In this month's issue we speak to concept artists Steve Chihnsuan Wang and Jason Nguyen about their exciting artwork, and illustrator Jana Heidersdorf shares her sketches and tips on generating new ideas. We also speak to freelance artist Dmitriy Pogorelov about his complex mixed media artworks.

Also in this issue, Baldi Konijn shows us how to create an original costume for a stylized Egyptian guard, Amir Zand paints the legendary huntress Artemis as a futuristic sci-fi character, and Alex Olmedo demonstrates how to speed paint an animal mech. You can also learn how Jung-Hoon Lee creates his bold sci-fi scenes, and James Wolf Strehle continues his series on the fundamentals of fantasy painting with a tutorial on effective values.

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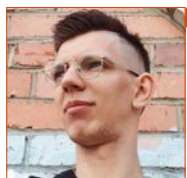
STEVE CHIHNSUAN WANG

Steve Chihnsuan Wang is a concept artist for the film and videogame industry. He is experienced in tackling a wide range of subject matters within the science fiction universe.



JASON NGUYEN

Jason Nguyen is a freelance illustrator and concept artist based in Toronto, Canada. His work mainly consists of illustrations for books, card games, board games, and promotional art for videogames.



DMITRIY POGORELOV

Dmitriy Pogorelov is a freelance artist from Russia. Currently he works as an illustrator and graphic designer using a mixed media technique, combining traditional materials with digital graphics.



JANA HEIDERSDORF

Jana Heidersdorf is an artist and illustrator whose work is inspired by everything feral and fantastical. Inspiration can be found in books, comics, magazines, and on walls and the internet.



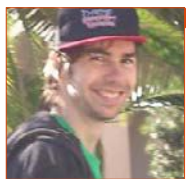
ALEX OLMEDO

Alex Olmedo is a freelance illustrator and concept artist based in Malaga, Spain. His work includes cover art for books and albums, as well as concept art for a number of diverse projects.



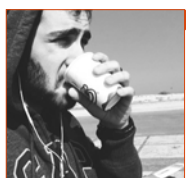
JAMES WOLF STREHLE

James is a concept artist and illustrator in the games industry. He works for Volta where he is afforded the opportunity to create art for some of the biggest games in the industry.



BALDI KONIJN

Baldi Konijn is a freelance concept artist from the Netherlands currently working for Riot Games. His focus tends to be on creating stylized character and creature designs.



AMIR ZAND (SAN)

Amir Zand is a freelance digital artist and illustrator specializing in cover art and promotional illustration. His work is also included in Digital Painting Techniques volumes 7 and 8.



JUNG-HOON LEE

Jung-Hoon Lee is an environment concept artist from South Korea. He has worked in the game industry for sixteen years and currently works as the Lead Concept Artist at NetEase.



ERIC SPRAY

Eric Spray is an artist and Art Director based in Wisconsin, USA. His projects include *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare*, *Call of Duty: Black Ops I, II and III*, and *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*.

Editor
Annie Moss
annie@3dtotal.com

Sub Editor
Adam Smith

Graphic Designer
Joseph Cartwright

Advertising Manager
Becky Grove
becky@3dtotal.com

Studio Manager
Simon Morse
simon@3dtotal.com

Managing Director
Tom Greenway

Advertising
Media pack and rates are available upon request. Contact Becky Grove: becky@3dtotal.com

International
Translation opportunities and international licenses are available. Contact Melanie Smith: melanie@3dtotal.com

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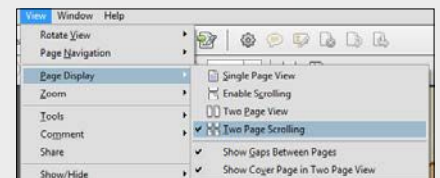
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Top tips for viewing

For optimum viewing of the magazine, it is recommended that you have the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader installed. You can download it for free here: [DOWNLOAD](#)

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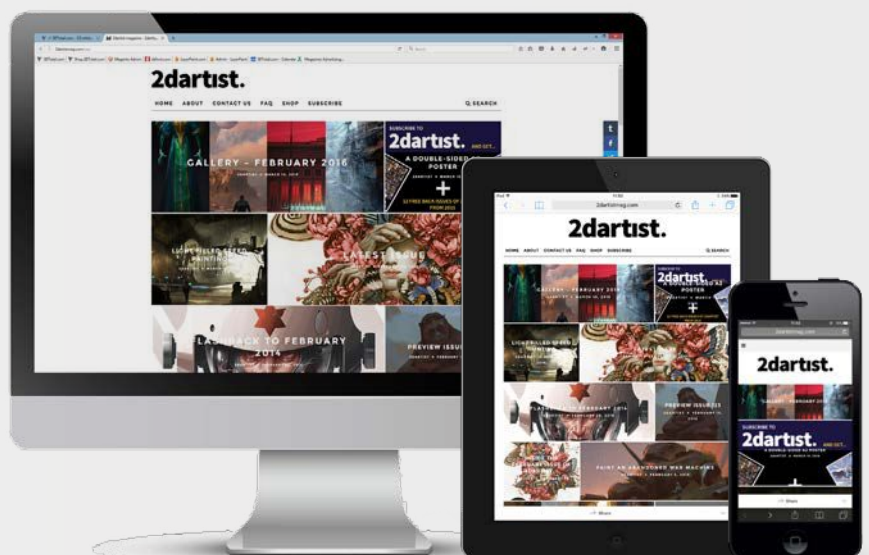
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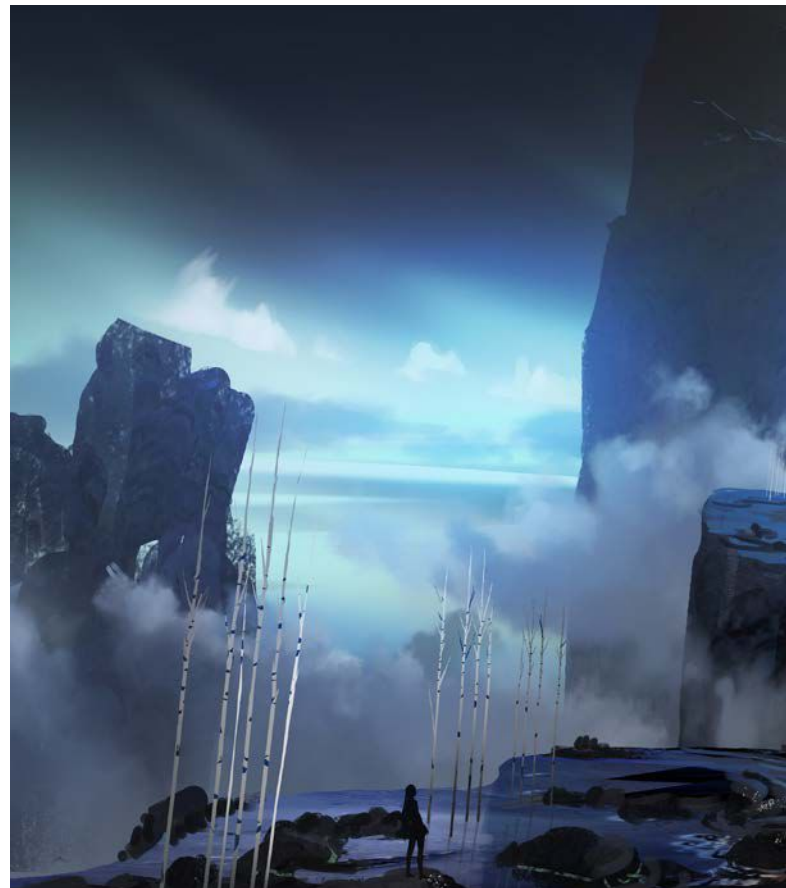
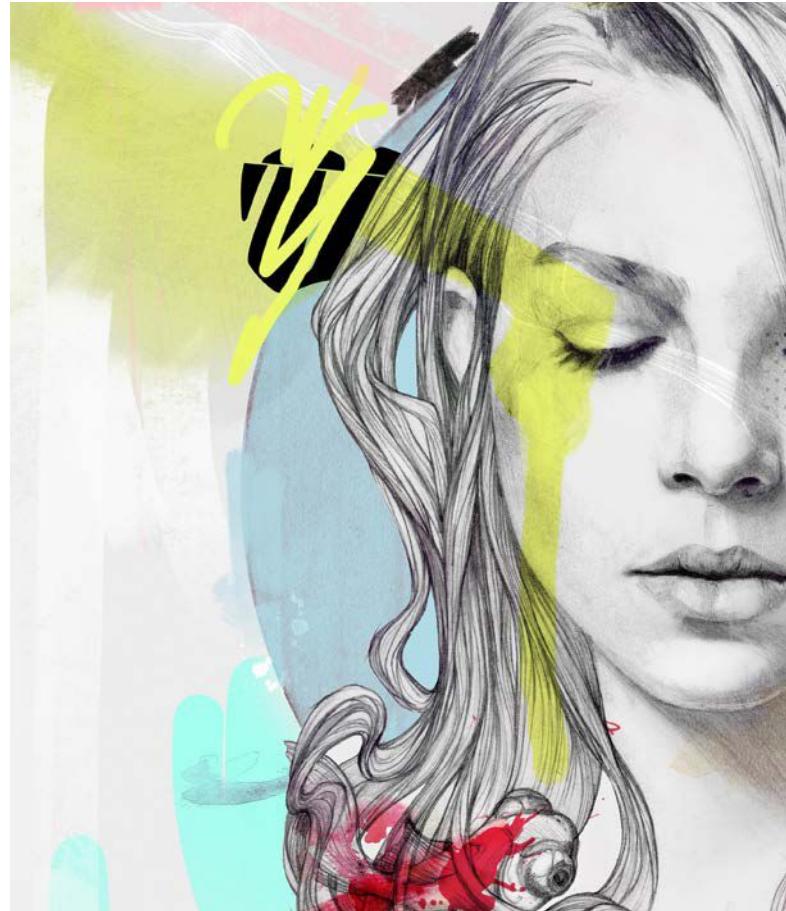
Reimagine Artemis the Huntress in an updated fantasy scene

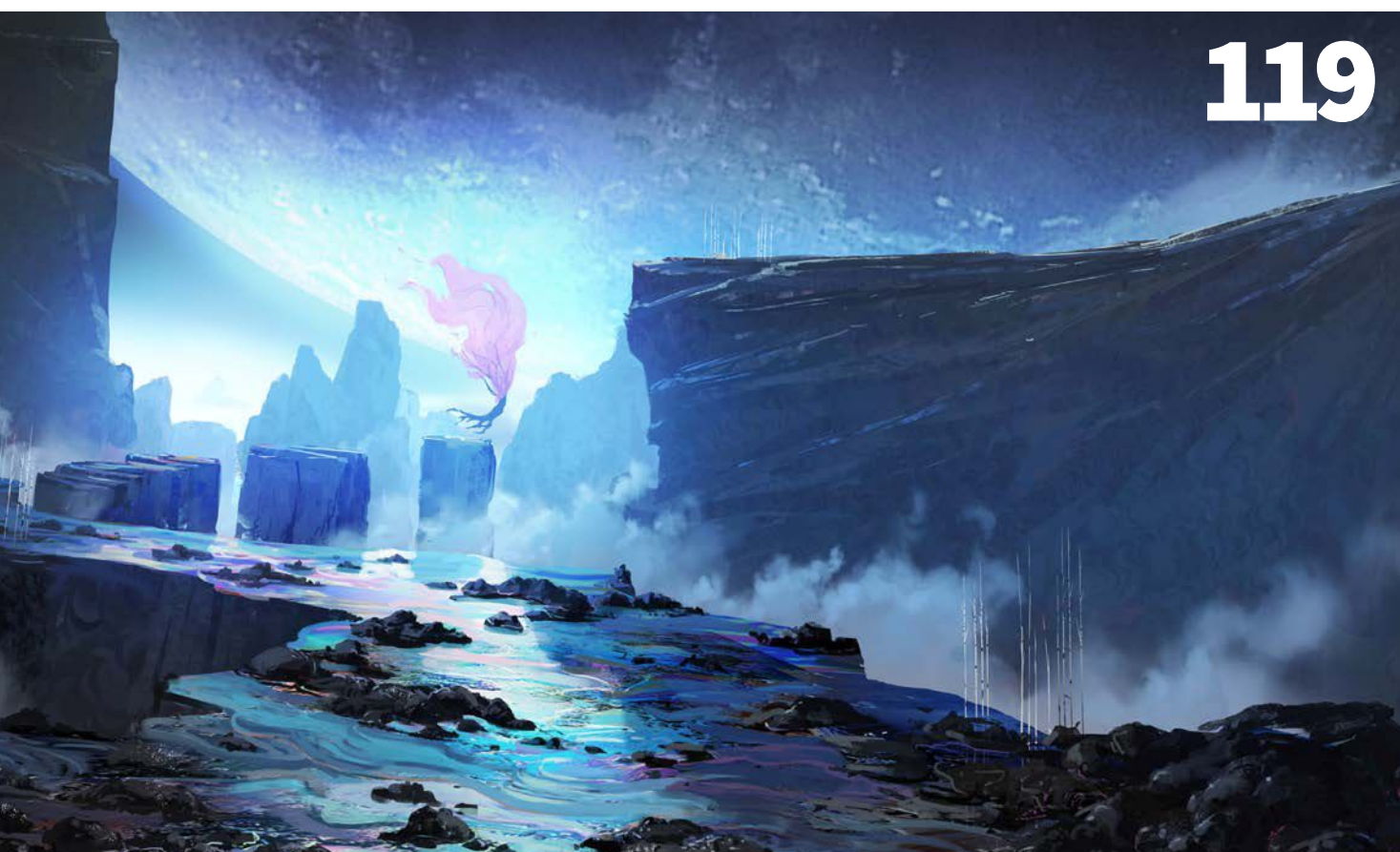
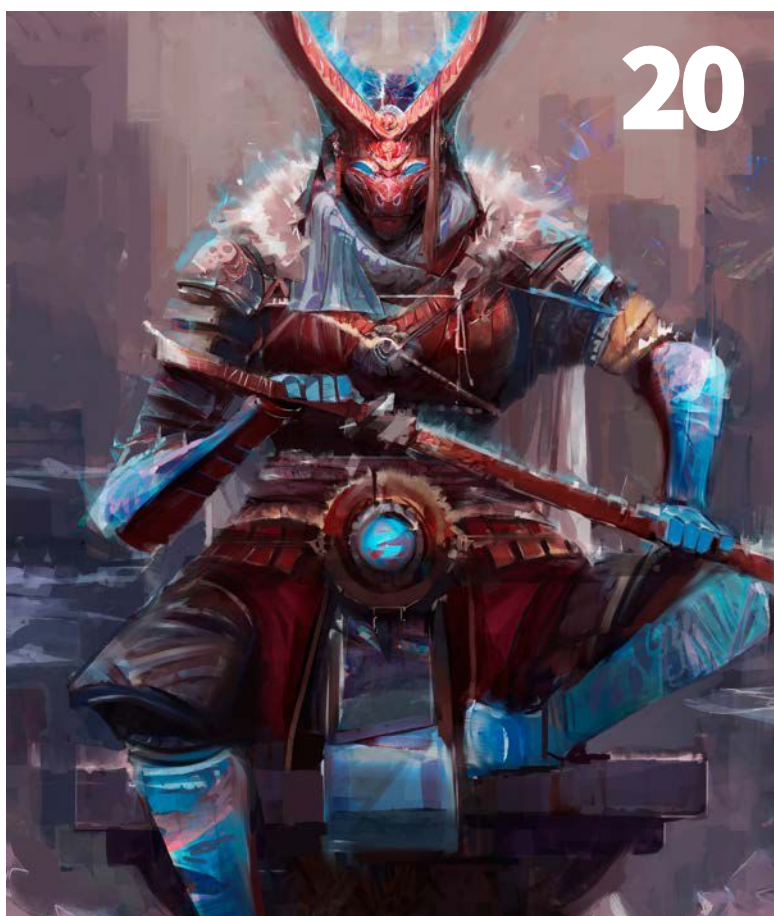
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The Artist



Steve Chinhuan Wang

stevechw.com

Interviewed by:
Annie Moss

Steve Chinhuan Wang is a concept artist for the film and videogame industry. He is experienced in tackling a wide range of subject matters within the science fiction universe.

Creating sci-fi worlds

Concept artist Steve Chinhuan Wang discusses his career and why he's pushing himself to create more personal work ▶



Although he readily admits to having been fortunate in his career, meeting the right people at the right time, Steve Chihnsuan Wang's career path hasn't always been easy.

He struggled to develop his painting work, been disappointed by big projects that were canceled, and experienced visa difficulties because he hadn't completed his degree.

However, by pursuing other means of learning, and finding mentors to guide his work, Steve has been able to develop an enviable portfolio. A freelance artist for films and

videogames, Steve is now putting an emphasis on creating more personal works to maintain the passion he feels for creating art. He talks to us about continuing to learn new skills and techniques, when he's most creative, and how he finds purpose in every image...

2dartist: Hi Steve, thank you for talking to 2dartist! Can you kick things off by telling us a little bit about yourself and your work?

Steve Chihnsuan Wang: Hi! I'm a concept artist and designer currently living in Vancouver, known by some as "Swang." Throughout my life, I have

been fortunate to meet all the right people at the right time who have propelled me forward, but it definitely hasn't been a smooth ride.

Initially, I studied Product Design at the prestigious ArtCenter College of Design right after high school. Eventually, I dropped out to pursue Entertainment Design at FZD School of Design. I've always felt more comfortable doing hard-surface designs due to my background in drawing products, but nowadays I tackle all the subject matters out there.

2da: Your works feature a lot of moody, atmospheric lighting; how do you accomplish this look?



“In my honest opinion, moody and atmospheric scenes are one of the easiest ones to establish”

SCW: If that look is what I’m going for, then I will try to study references that present the lighting condition. First I try to study from real life or photographs, then a few artworks that are close to what I have in my head.

In my honest opinion, moody and atmospheric scenes are one of the easiest ones to establish. It gives the artist a lot of room to make mistakes,

and make up shapes. Overall, it’s more forgiving while giving you a “wow” effect. I recommend checking out some of James Paick’s fundamental tutorials; he offers an effective and simple process for this type of environment painting.

2da: What made you want to pursue a career in the industry?

SCW: I’ve always drawn, so being an artist wasn’t a big surprise. The pivotal moment was probably discovering Feng Zhu’s Design Cinema. Back then I was struggling with digital painting and spent many sleepless nights going through tutorials.

Feng’s videos kept on popping up and I knew I wanted to do what he did for a living. I dropped out of college to pursue this career soon after.

In hindsight, so many things could have gone wrong and I’m very grateful that it turned out pretty well. With education though, the more you put in, the more you get out. Even after I landed my first job, I kept up with my practices after work so that the job can actually turn into a career.

2da: How would you describe your job to a group of aliens, who have no idea what an environment concept artist is or does? ►







SCW: Humans pay me to visualize a world, or sometimes a universe, before they commit to building it. I bridge the gap between the vision of a director and his audiences. I'm the architect for these things called movies and games that humans spend money on for fun.

2da: What are your preferred tools to work with and why?

SCW: My go-to 2D program is Photoshop, and for 3D it is MODO and ZBrush. I also use a Wacom Intuos with the Art Pen on a daily basis. For software, everything I use is industry standard. I made a very conscious decision to stick with a tablet instead of a Cintiq because I needed a tool I could travel with. From my observation, it's a lot easier to switch from a tablet to a Cintiq than the other way around. Nowadays, I try to carry a sketchbook around for quick sketches.

2da: How has combining skills in both 2D and 3D software benefited your work and career?

SCW: I'm not super proficient in 3D so I'm not able to utilize its full potential yet. However, I find it great for giving me accurate material and lighting conditions. Precise drop shadows are an element that will instantly make an object feel 3D, and software makes it easy to extract that information.

I also use different software as a getaway from each other. There are weeks where I paint too much and need a fresh approach to design. ZBrush comes in handy because it is almost like sketching with clay, except I can let go of a lot of the limitations of 2D. Ultimately, I try to have a finished image in my head early-on and software is merely the tool.

2da: Are there any tools, techniques or software you would like to explore in the future, and why?

SCW: Whichever the industry requires I suppose; I think most of them are just tools to achieve the

look you want. When I first started painting, I would push the paint around until it looked right. Now, I generally know what form looks pleasing and it is just a matter of how I want to visualize it.

In my opinion, if photorealism is what you're going for, then you are on an endless path. We will eventually get to a point, if we are not already there, that generating realistic images is a few buttons away. KeyShot is close, but it still requires quite a bit of work beforehand. In the future, maybe we will see a backwards trend in concept art where images are more impressionistic.

“The way different artists simplify shapes to create the impression of form, in combination of masterful compositional elements, gets me every time”

2da: Which artist or group of artists particularly inspire your work?

SCW: I go through phases of looking up to different people. To name a few, Jaime Jones, John Singer Sargent, John Park, Joseph Cross, Dorje Bellbroke, John Liberto. I'm more drawn towards the traditional painted rawness of an image, versus the hyper-realistic photorealism look. The way different artists simplify shapes to create the impression of form, in combination of masterful compositional elements, gets me every time. Whenever a project allows, I always try to add a little bit more of this style into my concept images.

2da: If you could meet any artist (past or present) what would you ask them and why?

SCW: I would meet Jaime Jones and ask him to mentor me. In my opinion, finding an appropriate mentor is one of the most important things in art, yet it is one of the most difficult things. Being able to receive critiques and guidance ►

Is there anything you think budding artists should try to avoid?

I think everyone is always budding in some way, so I would direct this more towards the student group. Don't chase the ideal résumé, do what you do because you love it. Personally, I used to put working at big studios, on big titles, and with big-name directors, as my number one goal. However, every job that you do will eventually feel like a job no matter what. The people you work with eventually become the enjoyment of the job; not the project itself.

from one of my favorite artists would give me insights into how I can approach my own work.

2da: Where (and when) do you feel you are at your most creative?

SCW: The more I work, the more I realize the importance of early morning. The best time to be creative is in the morning, and the best time to grind away artistically is late at night! It frustrated me tremendously that I had to spend my early morning commuting to work, so I eventually started conceptualizing in my head while driving. On the “good” days, I have a decently clear picture in my head by the time I actually get on my computer.

2da: Artist block is a problem for many creative people. Can you share a couple of tips you use when the inspiration stops flowing?

SCW: Definitely, and the way I deal with it is accepting the fact that not every piece I do will be something I’m proud of. I try to define a clear purpose for every image I’m creating. Most of the time, I’m just trying to have fun or improve on my techniques. Sometimes, the image will serve a purpose for the production that is not as visually pleasing. If I’m lucky, I get a few pieces that I’m happy with somewhere in between.

The key is to never stop creating art, never let “artist block” get in your way of learning. Try falling back into your comfort zone or do simple studies to get back into the groove!

2da: What initial steps do you take when you are first given a brief for a new project?

SCW: I look up references related to the brief and try to fill my head with ideas that could fit into the project. While I’m doing this, I find myself composing the reference images together in my head and this speeds my process when I’m actually drawing. After that, I make a schedule for myself of what I intend to achieve each day, depending on the deadlines of the project. Often, I also look up one or two references which gives me a goal for what I am striving to achieve in the project.

2da: When you’re not working hard on your art, what do you like to do with your time?

SCW: To be completely honest, I find that everything ties back to art; it became a lifestyle a long time ago. I have the luxury to travel and take photos a few times a year, which directly fuels my creativity. ►

If you could write a letter to your younger self, just starting out as an artist, what advice would you give?

Finish college to get that degree, it will open so many doors internationally, as most countries requires it for work visas. Education is always about how much you put in, not about finding a magical school or instructor that will instantly transform you into a better artist.

However, a good mentor would speed up your process, so don’t be afraid to reach out to people you deeply respect. Lastly, always draw for yourself and own a voice in your creative process. Don’t let professional work grind away your passion for art.

Steve’s significant artwork

I think this image, at the time, represented all that I had been working to improve on. It is rare that an image formulates in my head as clearly as this one did, but I pretty much knew what the finish result would look like from the very beginning. Elements like composition, color, brush economy, were executed to the best of my ability at the time. It was almost a “welcome back” piece for myself, as I hadn’t been doing personal works for more than a year. Most importantly, this was a piece that I was truly proud of and that unfortunately doesn’t come very often!





🕒 Artist Timeline Steve's career so far

2009: Carlos discovers digital art through *Arte y Diseño por ordenador* magazine

2013: Steve's first job doing illustrative work at The Sequence Group

2014: Joined Piranha Games to become more involved with design

2014: *Transverse Online* was the first project where Steve was fully in charge of the design

2014: *Transverse Online* was canceled, leading Steve to redefine his short term goals

2015: Struggled to get work in the US due to visa issues, despite having offers

2015: Brainstorm Mentorship, which gave Steve a fully improved portfolio

2015: Steve got into some trouble with a client that led him onto the freelance path

2015: Film director Neill Blomkamp discovered Steve and they started working together

2016: Personal work, allowed Steve to maintain his passion for what he does

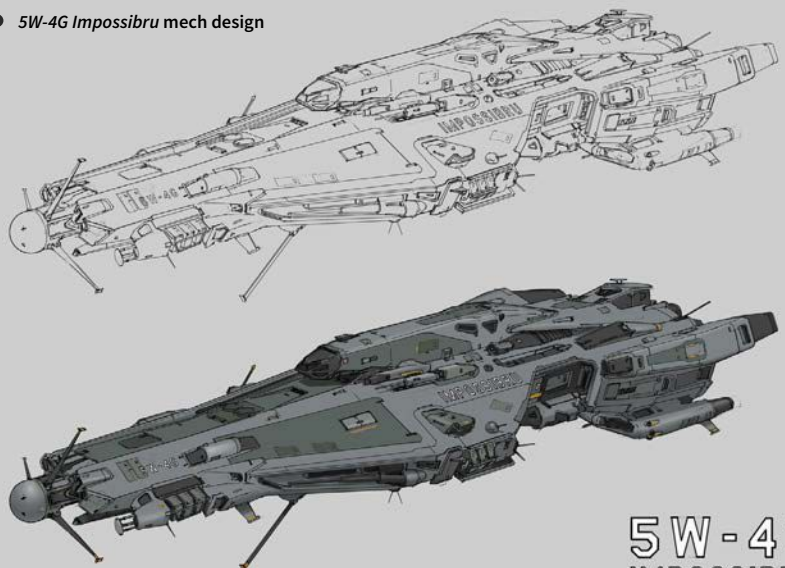
2017: Steve's personal pieces eventually landed him a position at Microsoft

- *Transverse Rebel One* mech design for the canceled *Transverse Online* project
© Piranha Games





● 5W-4G Impossibru mech design



5W-4G
IMPOSSIBRU

- *The Tribe*, a personal piece showing a tribe with pet-like, friendly dragons





Through photography I've learned so many things about light and composition that would have been impossible to figure out staring at my own paintings.

Obviously I'm a fan of videogames and movies, but both of which tie back to work just a bit too much. Lastly, great food and exercise are my go-to "scientifically-proven" methods to relieve stress!

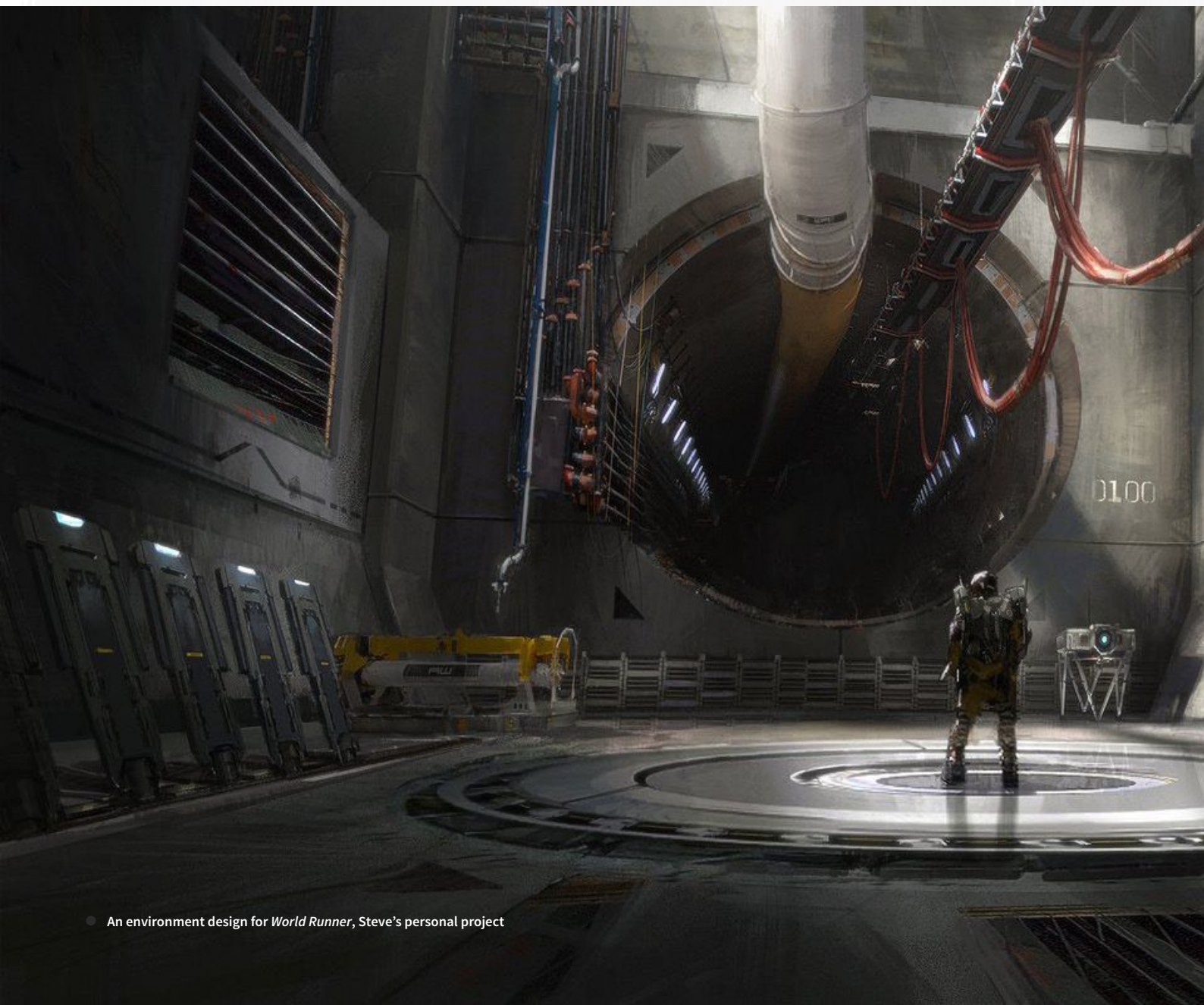
2da: Finally, where will we be able to see your work next? Are there any projects we should look out for?

SCW: One of my more ambitious goals this year is to continuously push out personal work. I've always found it really funny that as most artists progress in their career, having the time to create an image for themselves becomes a luxury. Professionally, look out for upcoming projects from Neill Blomkamp and the next installment of the *Gears of War* franchise! ●

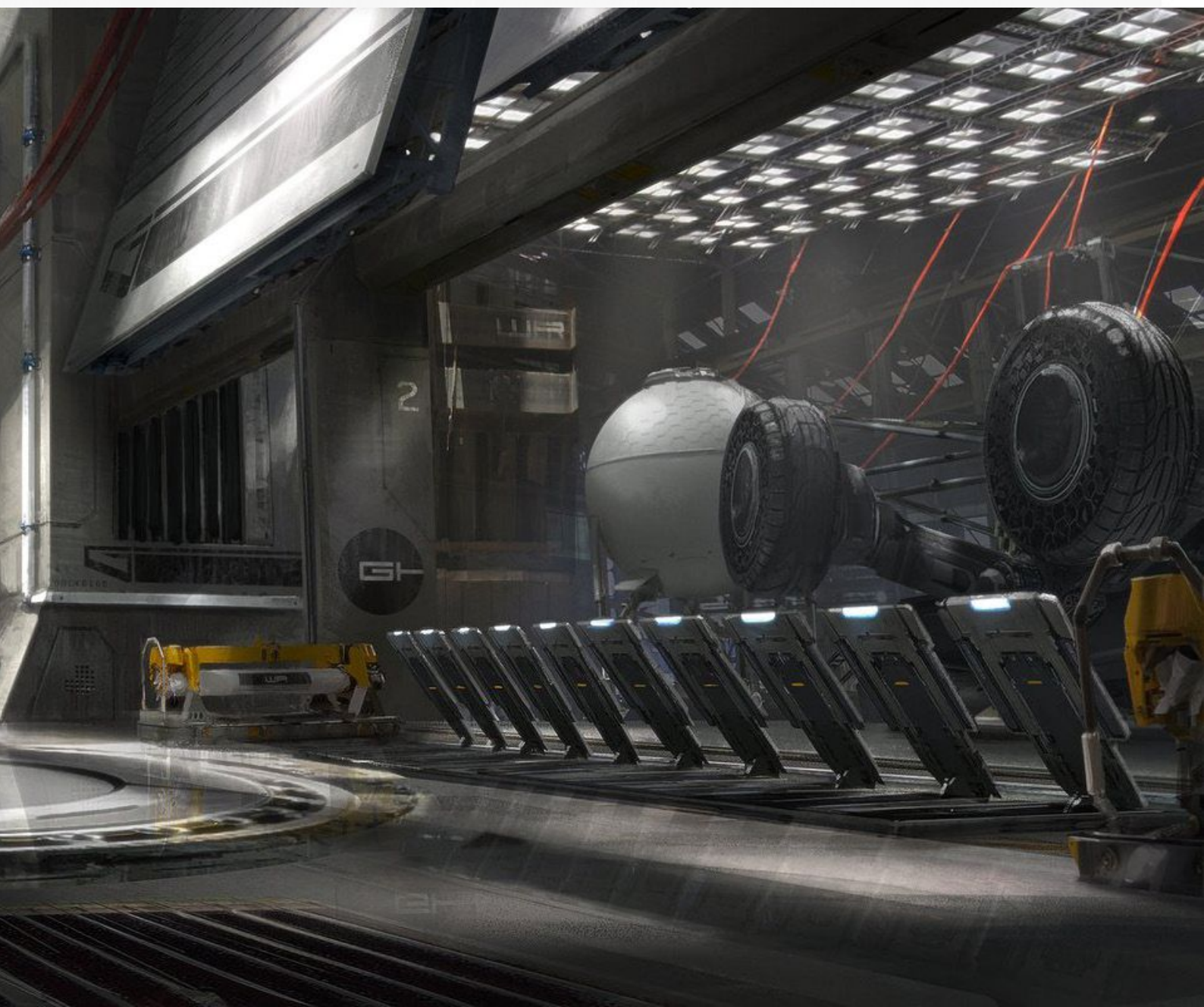
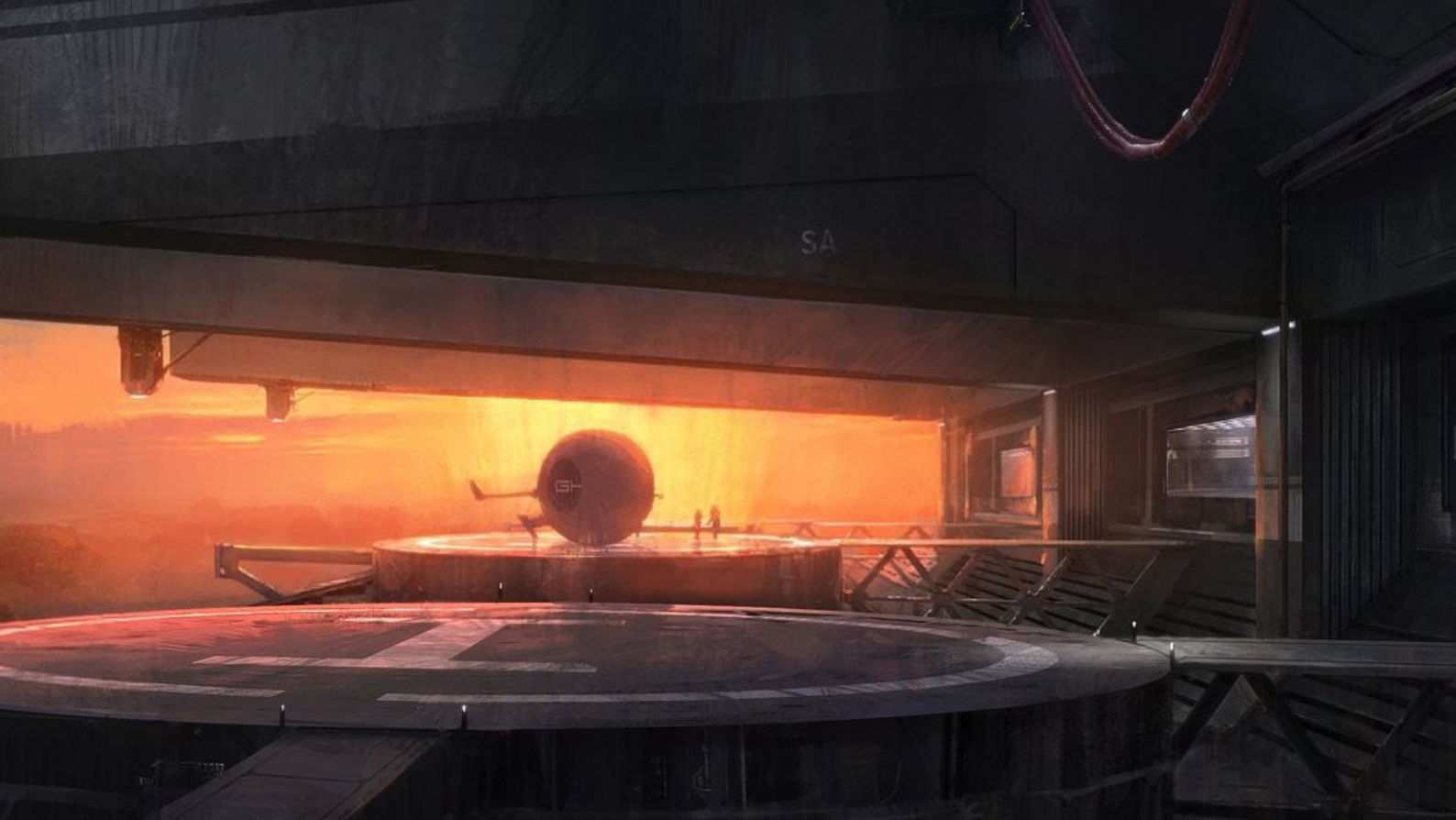
Thank you Steve for talking to 2dartist!



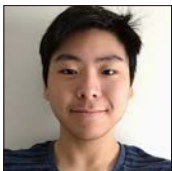
● A concept for research facility landing platforms



● An environment design for *World Runner*, Steve's personal project



The Artist



Jason Nguyen

artstation.com/artist/jasonn

Interviewed by:
Annie Moss

Jason Nguyen is a freelance illustrator and concept artist based in Toronto, Canada. His work mainly consists of illustrations for books, card games, board games, and promotional art for videogames.

Dynamic character portraits

Self-taught artist Jason Nguyen showcases his bold work and talks about the practices which have helped him develop as an artist ▶





Jason Nguyen, freelance illustrator and concept artist, has always loved creating interesting new characters. Since childhood he has been attempting to capture his energetic imagination in his drawings and express the pleasure he gets from creating new worlds.

As a self-taught artist Jason's enthusiasm for art has propelled him forward, motivating him to learn the fundamental aspects of art from books and online tutorials. As a developing artist he dedicated much of his spare time to learning new skills and techniques, and studying the working practices of other artists he aspired to be like.

Here, Jason talks to us about what has been the biggest contributing factor to his development, and why he wants to learn more about 3D software and traditional materials...

2dartist: Hi Jason, thanks for talking to 2dartist! Could you start by introducing yourself a bit to the readers?

Jason Nguyen: Hi there, thank you so much for having me! I am a freelance illustrator and concept artist based in Toronto, Canada. I started drawing at an early age like a lot of other artists. I fell in love with the world of fantasy at a very young age after being exposed to a ton of RPG type videogames and movies like *Lord of the Rings*.

I was often found lost in my own imagination, creating characters and worlds that I would pretend to live in. A lot of the things that I loved to draw were knights, mages, demons and angels. Fast forward fifteen years and not too much has changed.

2da: You often create mysterious fantasy characters using vibrant colors, can you tell us about how you have developed your style?

JN: Character creation is something that I have always loved doing, ever since I was a kid. With my character illustrations I really try to capture ►



An image from the Lunar New Years series, celebrating 2016 which was the year of the monkey

If you could write a letter to your younger self, just starting out as an artist, what advice would you give?

First, don't stress out so much about the future. There will be many times of self-doubt where you will feel like giving up. But as long as you keep working hard and strive to constantly improve you will get there, it will only be a matter of time!

Secondly, spend more time studying those fundamentals! It is extremely important to build a strong foundation and will save you from a lot of headaches and backtracking in the future! Other than that, keep studying and working hard and you will be on the right path to success!

the essence of my childhood by trying to have as much fun creating the piece as possible. Even with darker or serious subjects I try to add some sort of playful nature to it, through little surprises, vibrant colors, or fun character design elements.

If I start to lose interest in a painting I begin experimenting with it a lot by adding different colors and changing large elements to keep it fun for me. The idea of constantly experimenting and having as much fun with the painting as possible is essentially where my style is rooted.

2da: Where do you find inspiration for your work? Which other artists do you particularly admire?

JN: Inspiration for me jumps from a variety of places that include movies, books, videogames, TV, and nature. One of the more common sources of inspiration is drawn from my childhood experiences; I base my characters off loose interpretations of things that I thought of, read, or played as a kid.

What do you think has been most influential to your career success?

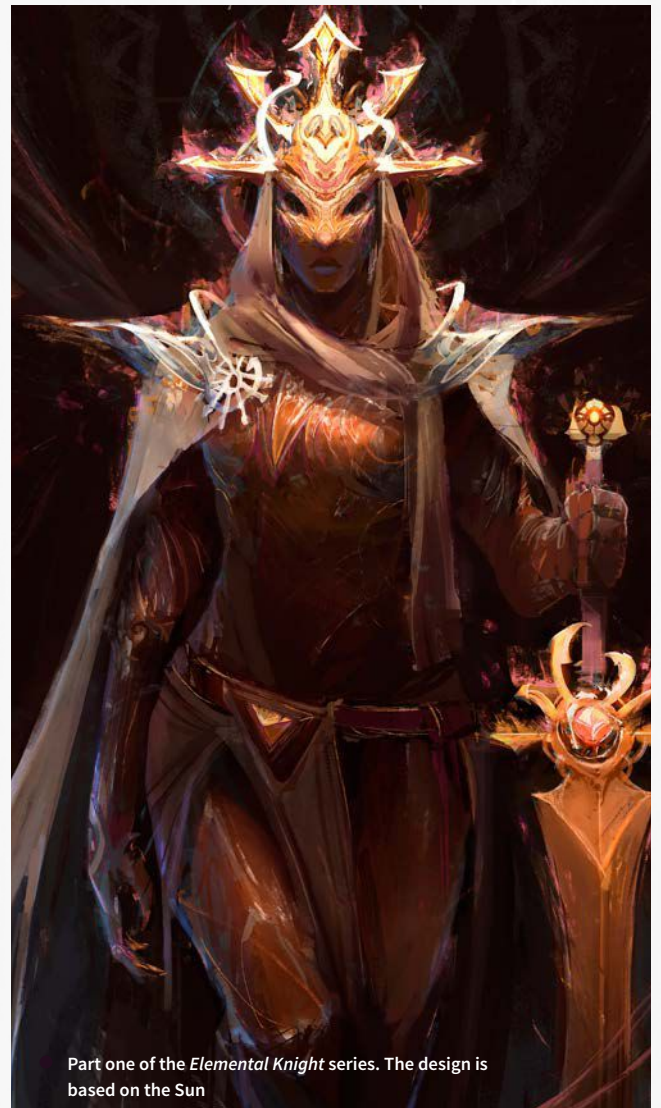
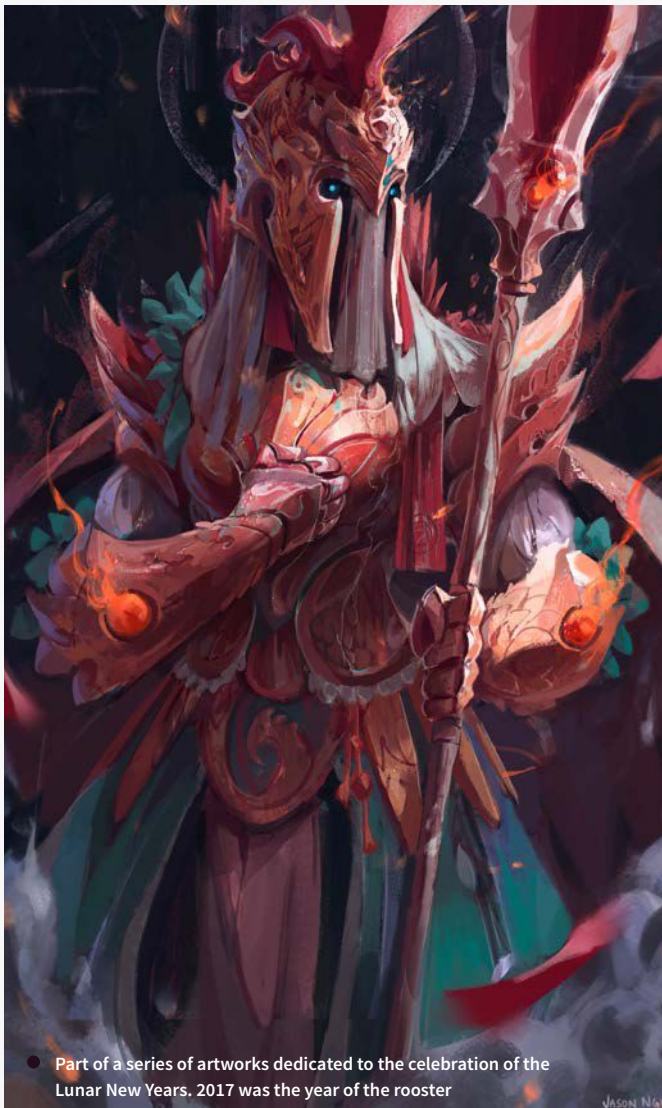
I feel like the art community in general has been a huge influence on my career. Joining and interacting with communities such as DeviantArt, ArtStation, Drawcrowd, and Facebook groups have been vital in my growth as an artist. Social media has made it so easy to share artwork and to interact with other artists from all around the world, allowing us to exchange feedback and motivate each other to continue growing. With all the great art that's being posted and shared through art communities it's really easy to constantly stay inspired.

There are also so many great resources like online video tutorials, live streams, podcasts, and magazines such as this one. It has gotten a whole lot easier for artists to get an inside look at the industry, to learn on their own, and make it as a self-taught artist.

There are also a ton of artists that I am really inspired by and admire a lot. To name a few off the top of my head: Ruan Jia, Fenghua Zhong, Even Amundsen, Wes Burt, Karl Kopinski, Feng Zhu, Brian Froud, Alan Lee, John Howe, Craig Mullins, Jaime Jones, Kim Jung Gi, John Singer Sargent, Edwin Austin Abbey, Frank Frazetta, and so many more!

2da: If you could meet any artist (past or present) what would you ask them and why?

JN: This is a pretty tough question! There are so many artists that I would love to meet and talk to! But if I could only pick one, it would probably be Ruan Jia. ►





The final part of the *Elemental Knight* series. The design is based on the wind element

JASON NGUYEN

Ever since I decided to become an illustrator his work has always been a huge inspiration for my work. I would be very interested in getting to know his journey as an artist, his experiences, and how he got started. I would also ask what some of his favorite projects are and which artists he looks up to.

2da: What are your preferred tools to work with? Are there any tools you find yourself using again and again?

JN: My preferred tool to work with is Photoshop CC. I am currently using a Surface Pro 3 to do my digital illustration work. I have also been using the iPad Pro with Procreate to do a lot of sketching and rough illustrations.

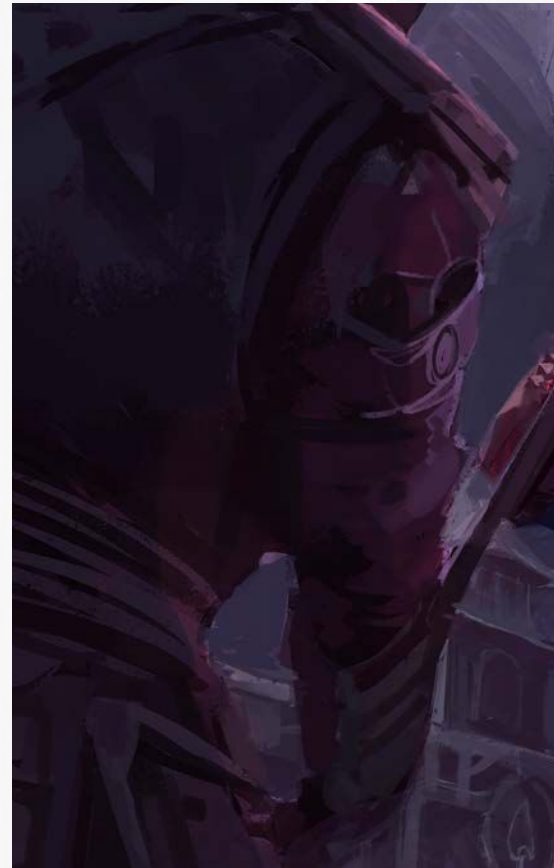
Some tools and programs that I have recently picked up in order to learn basic 3D and find ways to incorporate it into my workflow are ZBrush and SketchUp. I am constantly trying to seek new tools and techniques in order to improve my art.

2da: Which tools and software would you like to learn in the future?

JN: At the moment I do all of my illustrations digitally. Eventually, I would love to branch off and learn traditional painting mediums. Oils, gouache and watercolors are on the top of my list at the moment. I would also be very interested in having a more in-depth knowledge of 3D, learning tools such as Maya and 3ds Max. I feel like learning these software would be a great asset.

2da: How have you adapted and developed your skills over the course of your career?

JN: Being a self-taught artist, I did not have a really structured approach to learning. Like a lot of self-taught artists I learned a lot of the fundamentals such as anatomy, color theory, composition and so on from books and video tutorials online. I learned these things in bits and pieces, dedicating most of my free time to creating new artwork. Every time I struggled with something in one of my paintings, I would take a step back and study the things I needed to know in order to move forward. I would also do studies of other artist's work that I really admire. This is probably one of the biggest contributions towards the development of my



Based on the idea of a fallen angel, Jason experimented a lot with lighting and symbolism in this piece





● A fun battle scene; Jason really enjoyed painting armor and textures on this piece



skill and style. I spend a lot of time watching other artists work, analyzing their workflow, technique and thought process, and trying my best to adapt my own workflow. I always find it really interesting how other artists approach their work and I learn something new from each video or piece I study.

2da: What do you most enjoy about working on a new project?

JN: I think my favorite part about starting a new project would be the initial ideation and conceptual phase of it. A lot of the work I get are more character based illustrations so I really enjoy looking for

potential design reference for the character. Other than that I really enjoy the sketching phase of a project, being able to play around with different designs, colors, and compositions for the piece is something that I really enjoy, mostly because this is where I get the most freedom to experiment with the piece.

2da: Are there any other areas in the art world that you'd like to branch into and why?

JN: There are a few areas of art that I would love to branch off to! The first being 3D modeling, I find it to be very interesting and incredibly ►

Is there anything you think budding artists should try to avoid?

I think artists just starting out should really avoid keeping their art to themselves and not sharing it. I've met so many awesome people with great potential who avoid sharing their artwork because they don't think they are good enough.

But honestly, it's still extremely valuable and very important to start posting as soon as possible, whatever your skill level, to get your work out there. It might be really difficult to keep posting at first, but once you do it a few times it gets a lot easier and you will become more confident. It's something that I had to overcome as well when I started, but it definitely pays off. I can confidently say that I wouldn't have been able to make it this far without the support of the art community! Share your work, seek feedback and critiques, and constantly stay connected to the community.

Part three of the *Elemental Knight* series.
The design for this is based on the Earth



helpful when designing and drawing hard-surface elements and environments.

I would also love to get into 2D animation. Lately I have been really inspired by animators such as Yoh Yoshinari, Megumi Kouno, and especially Yutaka Nakamura. Seeing how much work and thought goes into animating a scene is very inspiring. I really enjoy painting battle scenes and characters with magic abilities, and being able to bring my characters to life through animation is something that I aspire to do in the future.

2da: What initial steps do you take when you are first given a brief for a new project?

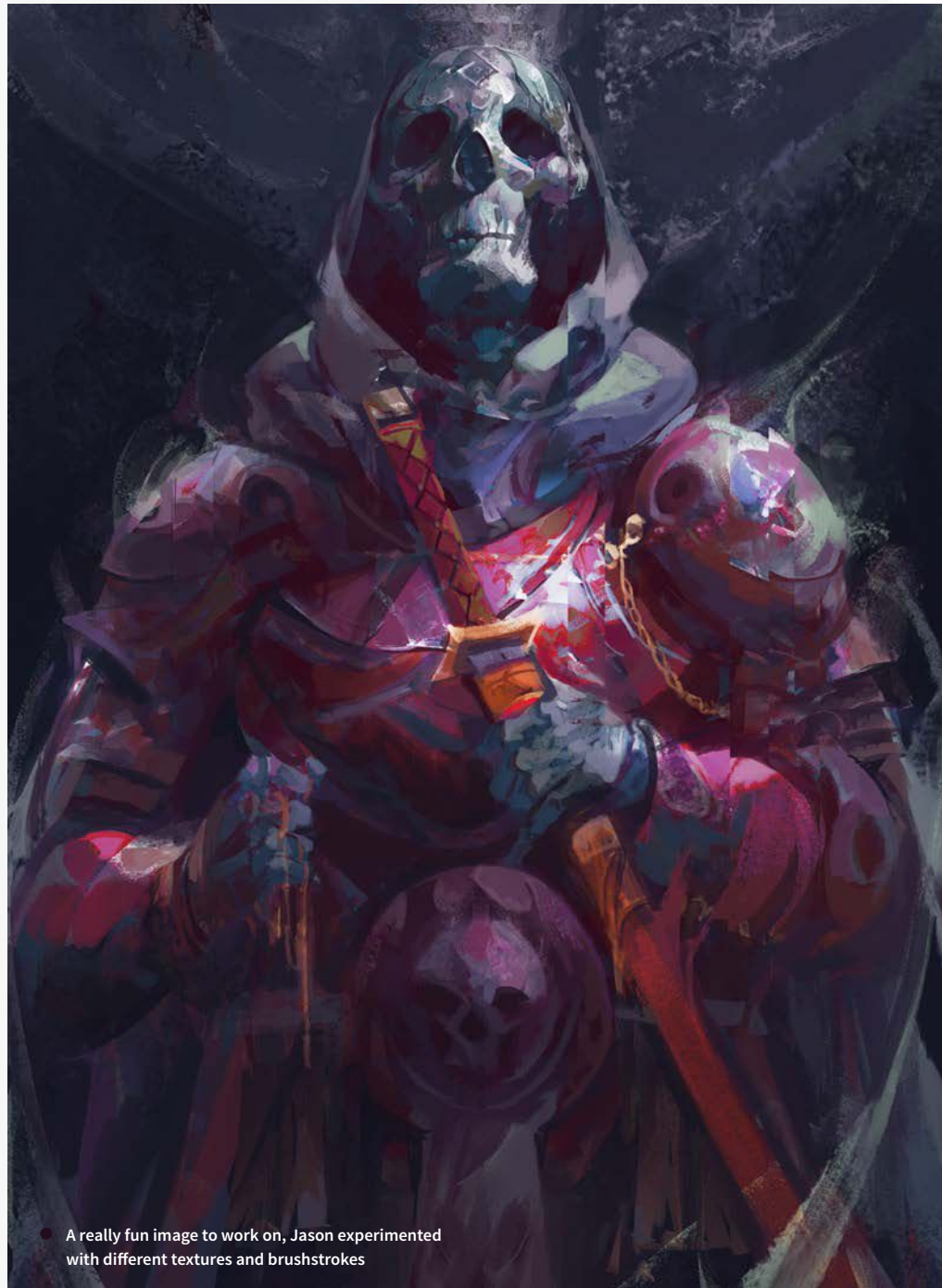
JN: After I'm given a brief for a project, I start by doing additional research into the subject and look for references that might help with the illustration.

For example, I look for photo references of potential backgrounds and character design elements.

I then develop a series of thumbnail sketches, roughing out the main components and general composition. Afterwards, I do a more detailed sketch of the thumbnail the client chooses. Once everything is approved and I have captured all the little details and symbolism the client would like, I start rendering it. I then provide frequent updates and adjust it based on the client's feedback until the piece is finished.

2da: Do you have any tricks or tips to keep yourself motivated on a difficult project?

JN: Whenever I come across a difficult project, I start by gathering as many reference materials as I can in order to give myself as much information ►



● A really fun image to work on, Jason experimented with different textures and brushstrokes

as possible. Difficult projects are usually the ones with subject matters that I have the least experience painting; landscape illustrations would be an example of this. Even though I struggle a lot doing them I constantly remind myself that the more difficult it is to paint something, the more I will learn from it and it will be more beneficial in the long run.

2da: Can you tell us anything about the projects you are working on at the moment?

JN: Currently I am doing a lot of illustration work that includes card illustrations for upcoming games and board games, as well book cover illustrations and promotional art for videogames. Unfortunately I cannot say too much about them at the moment, but they are really fun projects to work on and I can't wait to share the work I've done for them!

I am also working on a few personal projects that all revolve around a world I am trying

to build. A lot of my newer illustrations are all characters based off of this.

“I started learning the guitar and so far that has been a lot of fun and a great way to relax after a long day of work”

2da: When you're not working hard on your art, what do you like to do with your time?

JN: Most things I do now are dedicated to improving my art. Although whenever I feel burnt-out, or feel the need to relax, I enjoy reading fantasy novels, playing videogames and watching TV and movies whenever I can. I also enjoy experimenting with different art forms such as music and dance. Recently I started learning the guitar and so far that has been a lot of fun and a great way to relax after a long day of work.

2da: And finally, what should we look out for from you in the future?

JN: I have a lot lined up for myself in terms of personal projects. I plan on pushing myself a lot during this year. At the moment I am doing a lot of studies for world building and storytelling.

With my future illustrations I plan on incorporating more story elements. I also plan on exploring a lot of different themes and cultural history, mythology and legends. I have been doing a lot of research on these topics and have a few illustrations lined up for it already.

Other than that I plan on starting a streaming channel where I will experiment with different workflows and styles. ●

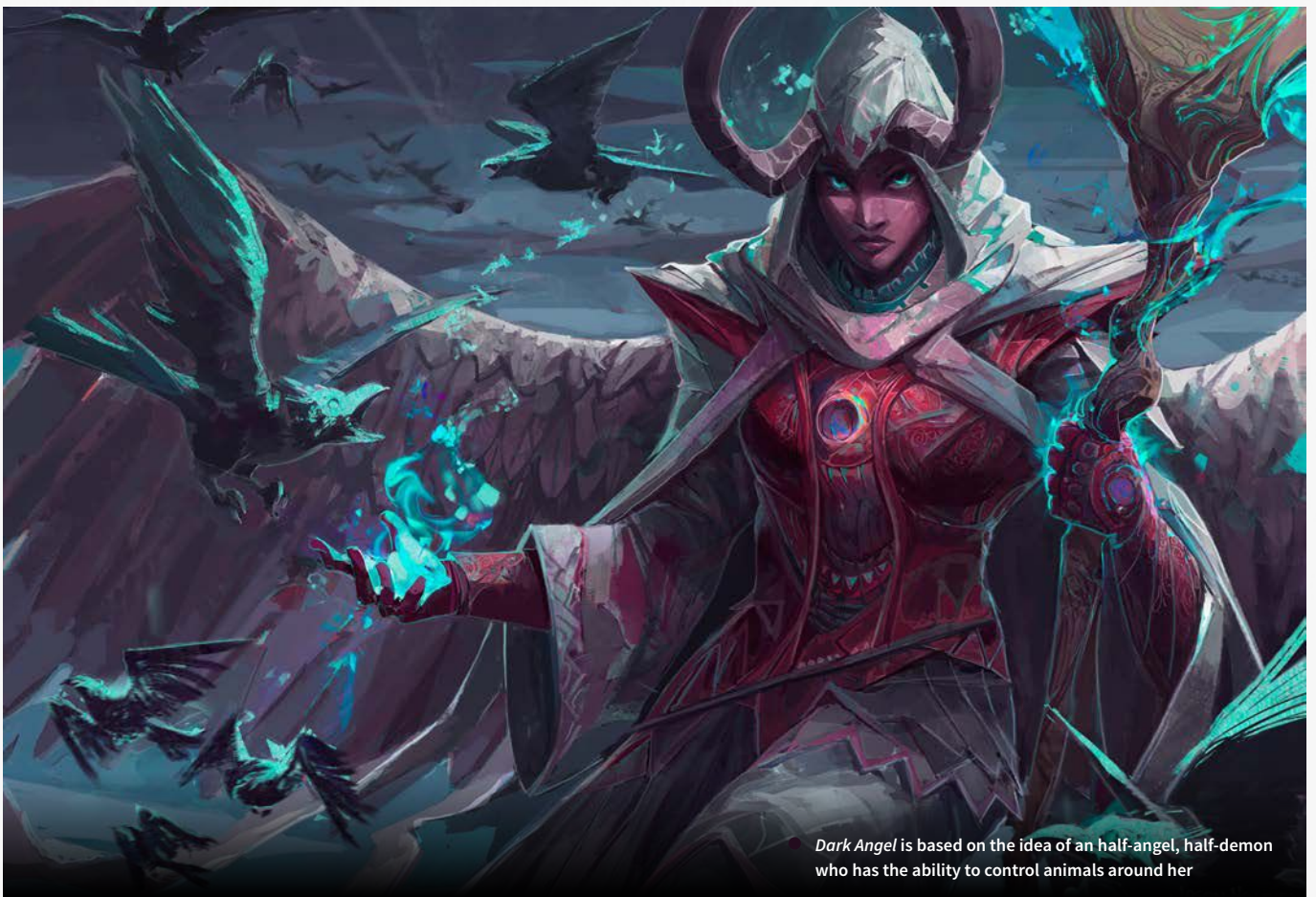
Thank you Jason for talking to 2dartist!

Jason's significant artwork

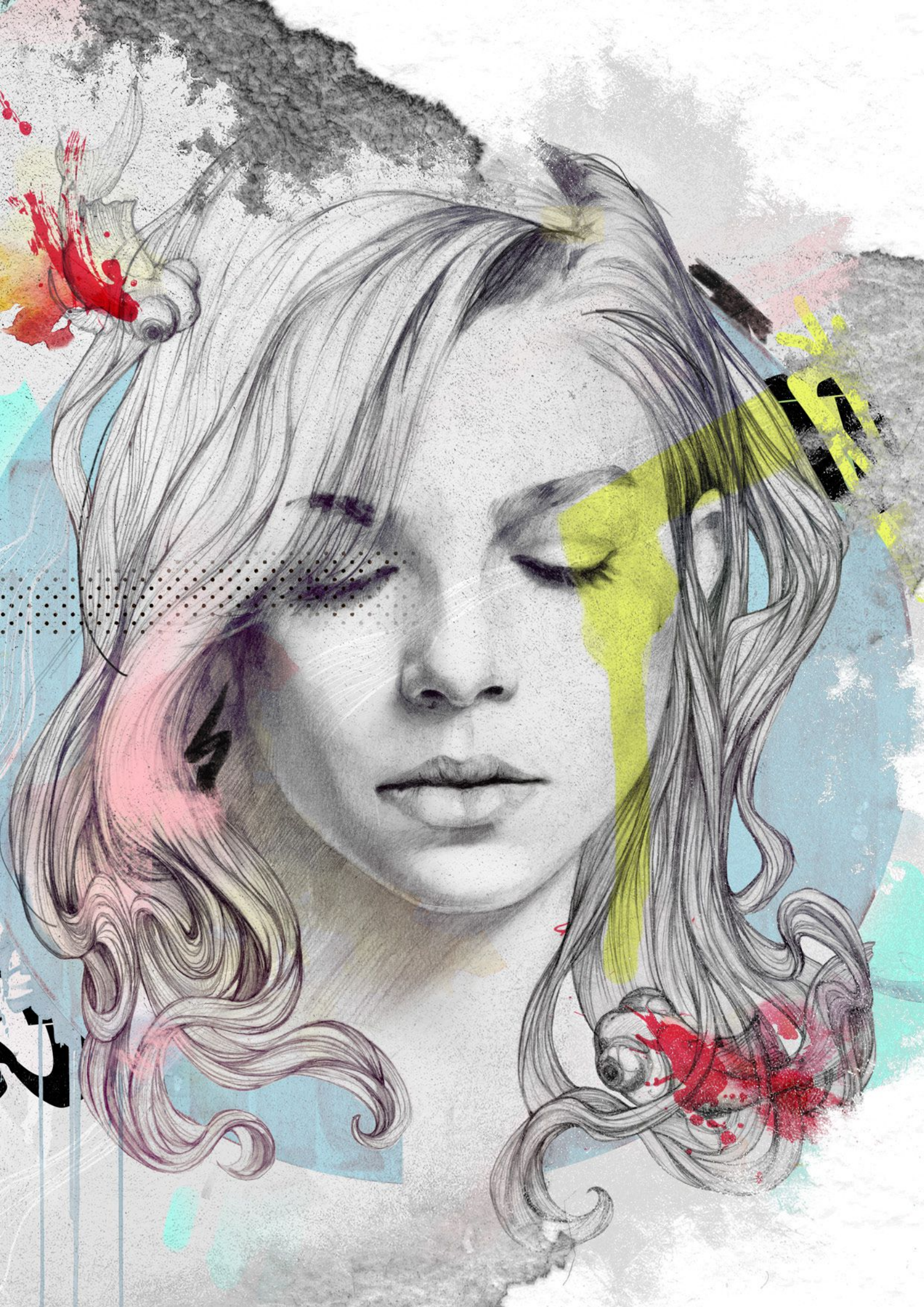
This piece represents a very important breakthrough in my work and style development. It was the first time that I put a lot of thought into one of my illustrations and invested a large amount of time on one piece. It took me around sixty hours to complete it which was almost triple the amount of time I spent on anything. I learned to be more patient and take my time instead of rushing like I would normally do. During my time working on the piece I started to develop the mindset of constantly experimenting with something until I was satisfied. This played a big role in developing my current style and workflow!



- Another character from a personal project Jason is working on. This character comes to battlefields to collect the souls from fallen soldiers



Dark Angel is based on the idea of an half-angel, half-demon who has the ability to control animals around her





Dmitriy Pogorelov
podessto.com

Dmitriy Pogorelov is a freelance artist from Russia. Currently he works as an illustrator and graphic designer using a mixed media technique, combining traditional materials with digital graphics.

A R T I S T S P O T L I G H T

Expressive mixed media illustrations

See how freelance illustrator Dmitry Pogorelov mixes traditional materials and digital techniques to create his emotive works ▶

By combining traditional materials such as pencil, watercolor paints, and marker pens, with digital elements, freelance artist and illustrator Dmitriy Pogorelov creates contemporary, multi-layered artwork. He also often incorporates text and calligraphy techniques into his manifold works. Exploring such diverse materials, and experimenting with form and line, gives Dmitriy the opportunity to test out the limitless possibilities of art. This freedom to experiment, and express his thoughts and feelings, is what drives Dmitriy in his work. Here, Dmitriy discusses his passion for art, his plans to experiment further in the future, and how he manages his time as a freelancer...

2dartist: Thanks for talking to 2dartist. First off, could you introduce yourself with a bit about your background and projects?

Dmitriy Pogorelov: Hello, thank you very much for your invitation! My name is Dmitriy Pogorelov. I'm a freelance artist and illustrator from Russia. I work in mixed graphic styles to create illustrations for books, covers for music albums, and advertising.

I've been interested in fine art since childhood. My education began at the local art school, where I studied for eight years. I also studied at my teacher's art studio for two years after graduation and then was able to continue my education in graphic techniques, styles and composition with the architecture faculty at university. Although I have an architectural education, my true calling is as an illustrator.

"I became an artist because I wanted to paint, express my feelings, my mood, inspire and give energy to others"

2da: What or who encouraged you to take up a career as an artist?

DP: It is hard to say; I've always liked drawing and I love to look at the pictures of different artists, comics, drawings on postcards and so on. I used to get very excited and I try to do the same for myself. It is something I've always wanted and have always been focused on.

I remember watching the movie *Titanic* at school. I really liked the main character, Jack Dawson, performed by Leonardo DiCaprio. Jack is an honest, free, independent artist and since then he has stayed in my mind. I saw the infinite freedom of this hero. I wanted to draw more and more every day. I became an artist because I wanted to paint, express my feelings, my mood, inspire and give energy to others. There are no limits, only you, a piece of paper, your thoughts and feelings. I think this is the best profession in the world.

2da: Your portrait work is emotive, with splashes of bright color, can you tell us about how you developed this style?

DP: My artwork is a mix of different graphic techniques and styles. I like to combine different materials and I always try to choose the technique and material that can show the main idea of the picture. I am fond of drawing people, especially their faces, hands and body positions; every detail that can help to express their mood and feelings better.

I paint mainly in a realistic way. I try to focus on the main idea and put in the background the less important elements. The background only helps to support the composition. The drawing becomes more stylish when I separate the main object and background. I prefer the combination of pencil drawing and watercolor drawing, which makes a picture look bright.

2da: I notice that some of your works include text. How does the written word influence your illustrations?

DP: I take an interest in calligraphy and this passion is reflected in my works. Sometimes the text is a part of the composition which helps me find a good balance and add some meaning. Sometimes I create secret messages using lettering. That's a mystery.

Most of my illustrations are my thoughts about a particular topic; the words on the picture are usually the essence of all I want to say. It can be the main meaning of the work. It is very important for me that my work seems to be more than just a pretty picture, but something that stays in people's hearts.

2da: Do you have a favorite place you like to go to draw?

DP: Yes, I think there are a few places like that. One of them is my studio. This is my own world where I can escape from everything and concentrate on ►





● *Between Angels and Insects*. Work inspired by the Papa Roach song



my work. It is located close with a pine forest and the university where I studied. I have a lot of associations with this place. Many ideas come to my mind while I'm walking in the park. Especially I like to walk there in the summer and autumn. That's how I get the energy.

One more "place of power" is my parents' house, the place where I grew up. I love to go there and work, especially in late summer, and get into the atmosphere of my childhood. I experience the same smells of trees and plants that filled my room when I was at school.

2da: What advice can you give to our readers who want to develop their drawing techniques in a similar manner?

DP: The first thing I would suggest is to study the anatomy of the body and human face. It seems hard, but without a good knowledge of anatomy, you can't draw the feelings and emotions. The picture will be less expressive, sometimes even fake.

Secondly, it is necessary to practice drawing with a watercolor and markers. I would recommend making several copies of your favorite artist's works. It always helps to understand their style better. If you want to get a good result, try to do your best at each stage of the work. It doesn't matter if it is a sketch or a final work. Do not be afraid to experiment, mix materials, or try different techniques. Just take a clean sheet and feel free to express your own ideas.

2da: What are your preferred tools to work with and why?

DP: Usually I use watercolor, ink and different markers in my work, but the base material of my style is a pencil. I love working with pencils because they have a very wide tonal range and they are perfectly combined with other graphic materials.

I use pencils of different softness to make more expressive figures. Soft pencil is best when creating smooth conversions from light to shade,

or to saturate the shade and to add depth to it. Hard pencils are perfect for drawing small details, and creating hatching. I usually use mechanical pencils for better control of the stroke thickness.

2da: Where do you turn to for inspiration? Are there any artists you like to reference?

DP: Surprisingly, for me the main inspiration is music. I feel inspired by the work of other people. It can be a musical composition, a book or a film, whatever. I'm inspired by people who believe in what they do, put a special meaning in their work, live it, and who are completely devoted to their case.

It can be strongly felt when you hear a song or music, when you watch a movie or read a book. I like watching documentaries about music or art. I'm always interested in learning more about how different products were created. I like to lift the curtain a little and touch the mystery of creation. It encourages me strongly.

As for drawing and graphics, I follow many talented artists on Instagram and Behance. My favorite modern artists are Gabriel Moreno and Paula Bonet.

2da: What has been your favorite project to work on so far?

DP: I think it was working on an illustration for the *This tiny perfect world* book cover. It is a beautiful book by the great writer, Lauren Gibaldi, and the release date is scheduled for autumn 2017. I really enjoyed this book and reading it left a big impression, so it was awesome to work on the cover of this book. The whole process of the work, from reading the book and the creation of the first sketches, to working on the final version of the illustration, was very absorbing and exciting. Searching

for the right images, making a composition, selecting colors and so on, all of this has given me great experience. Unfortunately, I can't show it to you before the book's release, although I am dying to do so. Let's wait for the autumn and you can see everything for yourself!

2da: How do you deal with a challenging project? Do you have any tips for our readers?

DP: When I work on a project I often have difficulties with creating the basic idea or with choosing the graphic techniques. To come up with the idea, I usually try

to create an array of associated elements for the topic which speeds-up this process. I also do as many drawings as possible, drawing everything that comes to mind, and this causes an emotional reaction. It helps me to organize even the random thoughts and not ►





● *Pink dreams.* This image is from a series inspired by the hottest tropical birds



to miss anything. Then I try to choose the best ideas and combine them into one image. As for the working process, to understand how my drawing should look and to imagine the color and future composition, I make a rough sketch in Photoshop. Sometimes when you work on a project you are afraid of spoiling it or doing something wrong. This helps to avoid mistakes when you start to work on the final step as you already have a digital sketch of your work in front of you.

2da: Are there any other skills and techniques would you like to learn in the future? Are there any materials you would like to experiment with?

DP: Yes of course, as I said, I enjoy calligraphy and I don't want to stop there. Calligraphy strongly influences my style of drawing; it becomes more concise and accurate. Recently in my work, I have started to use color and watercolor pencils actively. I really like the texture of the strokes from watercolor pencil.

I've also always been interested in a form of Japanese painting named Sumi-e. I think that in the near future I'd like to learn this kind of fine art. I'm really interested in trying to combine traditional methods of drawing, such as Sumi-e, with modern or even digital graphics. I think that the result can be very original.

2da: What has your experience as a freelance artist been like? What lessons have you learned?

DP: Probably the most important thing is to learn how to organize your time. In freelance work the main disadvantage is the lack of a working schedule. With no external control over your actions, you have to take things into your own hands. The truest step for concentrating and being productive is to draw up a plan of work for a day, a week, a month, a year. The plan will help you to distribute your activities and prioritize.

Another feature of this job is that you never know when you will drop the opportunity to work on a new project. Therefore, if you want to move forward, you must always try to keep a positive attitude. If you don't sit in one place, the new project will come sooner or later, so it is better to devote free time to improving your drawing techniques.

2da: What does a working day in your life look like?

DP: My working day usually starts quite late, but wake up at 8 or 9 a.m. in the morning. I like to go jogging because when you have a sedentary job, sports are necessary. Therefore, in the morning I go for a run, or if the weather is bad I do some exercises at home. In the morning, before dinner, I usually sort emails and reply to messages. I try not to use social networks or check my emails more than two times a day as it is distracting.

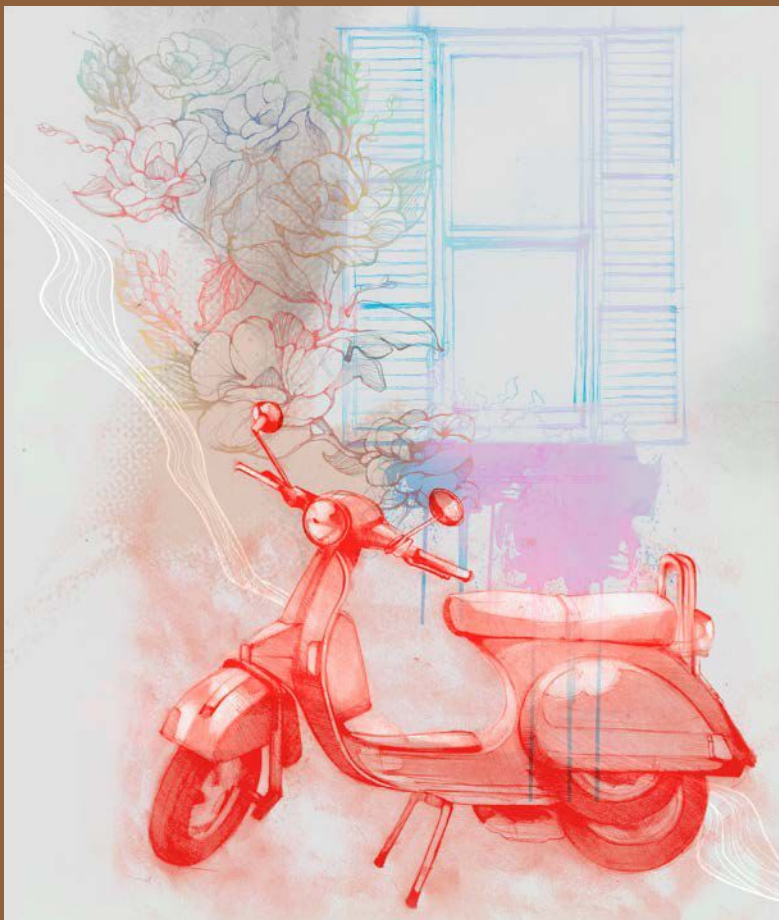
During lunchtime, I prefer walking. I usually do what I need to, go to the shop or go for a stroll. My main work on the project begins at 3 or 4 p.m. During the process, I try to take small breaks. I rarely go to bed early; I usually finish work and go to bed after midnight. Sometimes this is because I need to finish the project, but if I am inspired I can't go to sleep until I have finished my work.

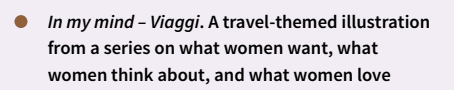
2da: How do you like to spend your time when you aren't creating beautiful art? ►

⚡ DMITRIY'S SIGNIFICANT ARTWORK

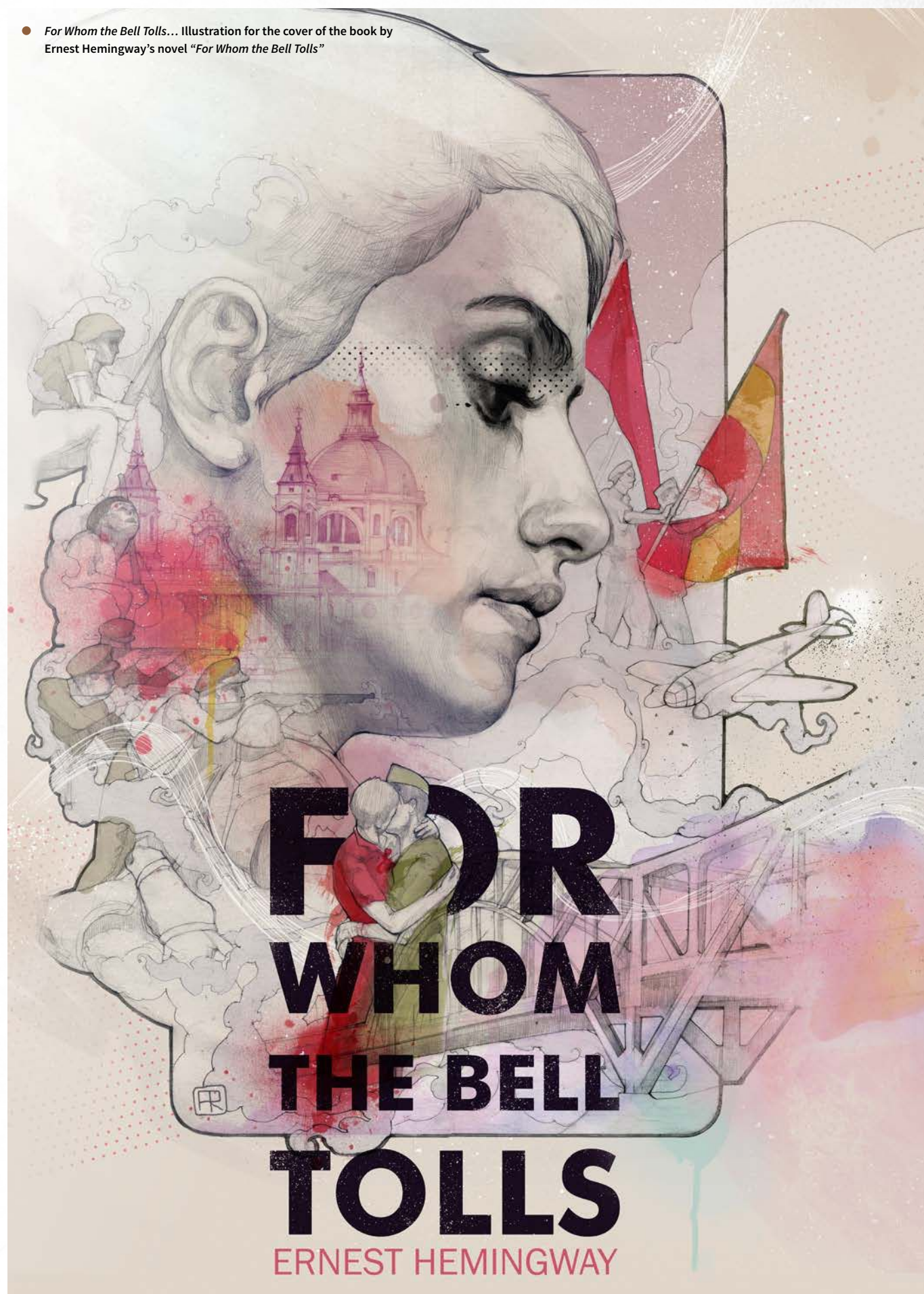
Among all of my works, this one has a special place in my portfolio. This illustration was created especially for wine labels. The wine, which is called *Sapore Locale*, is made from white Falanghina grapes, and it is produced by the US company Winc. Perhaps, at first glance, this work has a simple composition and its meaning is clear, but it reflects the spirit of the region of Italy where the grapes are grown. It reproduces the spirit of the place, and aromas of southern Italy.

It was my first major international project, so I can say it was the start of my professional career. Working on this project was a strong impulse for me, and a motivation to continue doing what I love. I wanted to improve myself, develop my style and keep moving forward, no matter what. I like this work, because I could express the mood and atmosphere in the illustration, and it reflects the style of my work.





- *For Whom the Bell Tolls...* Illustration for the cover of the book by Ernest Hemingway's novel "For Whom the Bell Tolls"





● Where faith begins... Inspired by Alicia Keys' song Hallelujah. Focused on the feelings and emotions that Dmitriy wanted to convey



is there a
place i can go
where the lonely
river flows?

where
fear ends
and faith
begins...

● *Playing Arts - Ten of clubs. An illustration for the PlaingArts Contest*



DP: In general, it rarely happens; even if I'm not working on a project I still paint. I sketch too; I try to do something new and improve my style. Also in my free time I like to study and learn something new from documentaries about musical groups and their albums, about drawing, artists and their art, and from different books.

Every month I try to choose one interesting book. If the weather is nice and I don't have urgent projects I go for a walk or ride a bike.

2da: And finally, what can we look forward to from you next?

DP: First of all, I'll continue to develop my style. In any task there is a way for growing, and I'm happy that I improve my skills with each new project. In the near future I will be working on illustrations for a book, which I can't give the name of yet. I'm looking forward to this project as for me it will be a new experience, and I think that it will be something original and conceptual.

I'm also finishing work on a three-part series of illustrations. In short, this project is my vision and reflection on concepts such as "world", "dream" and "love." I'm looking forward to the time when I can show them. ●

Thank you Dmitriy for taking the time to speak to 2dartist today!

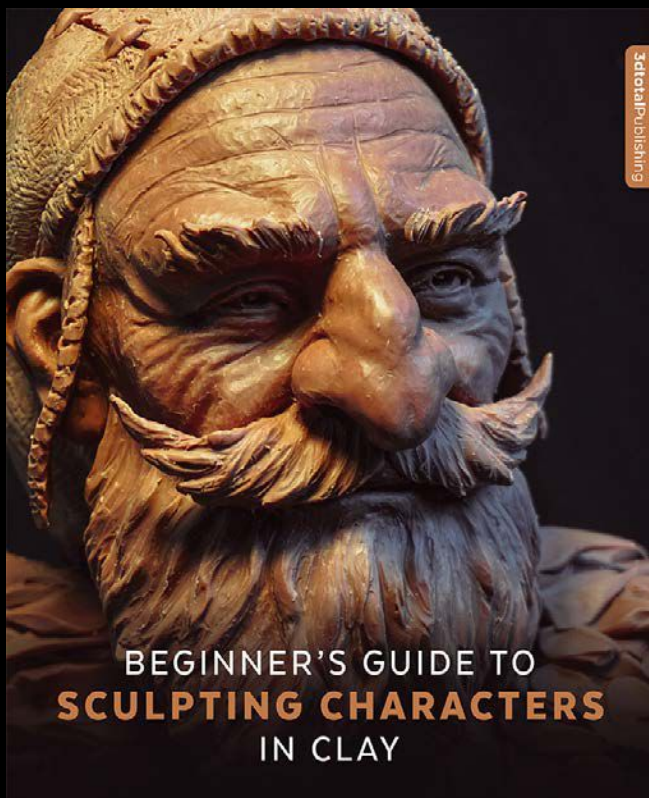
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3dtotal Publishing is a small independent publisher specializing in inspirational and educational resources for artists. Our titles proudly feature top industry professionals who share their experience in step-by-step tutorials and quick tip guides placed alongside stunning artwork to offer you creative insight, expert advice, and all-essential motivation.

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The Artist



Jana Heidersdorf
janaheidersdorf.com

Jana Heidersdorf is an artist and illustrator whose work is inspired by everything feral and fantastical. She finds inspiration within books, comics, magazines, on walls and on the internet.



Sketchbook of Jana Heidersdorf: Nature inspired fantasy sketches

Illustrator and artist Jana Heidersdorf shares tips on generating new ideas, experimenting with media, and filling your sketchbook with scribbles and sketches ▶

All images © Jana Heidersdorf



Delve into the fantastical and feral world of Jana Heidersdorf's sketchbooks...

It probably won't come as a surprise that I have always drawn in one way or another. Contrary to the popular belief that a child's imagination is without limits, my early scribbles showed little besides portraying my family, pets, and the occasional princess.

With great enthusiasm, but little ambition, I went through a period of drawing Harry Potter cartoons (much to my mother's delight), obsessively producing near identical looking anthropomorphic mice, and the occasional drawing of a horse cursed with legs of questionable functionality!

In my early teens I started to draw comics – at first it was to amuse my friends, but at some point drawing became forever

entwined with who I am. I would never call it my passion; it just is a part of me. During this time my father kept subtly prodding me with anatomy books, probably because my blatant disregard for proportions and anatomical correctness was painful to watch. I started to keep sketchbooks, although I didn't develop a consistent sketching habit until I went to art school.

Nowadays, my sketchbook is my sacred personal space. As a very anxious person it's invaluable to have a place where I can jot down notes, thoughts, ideas, and scribbles without having to worry about their quality; it's my artistic gym, full of mistakes and learning. Currently I have several sketchbooks in rotation, one notebook that I carry with me at all times, one in which I can experiment with different media, and another one that I use for watercolor studies, my guilty pleasure. ►



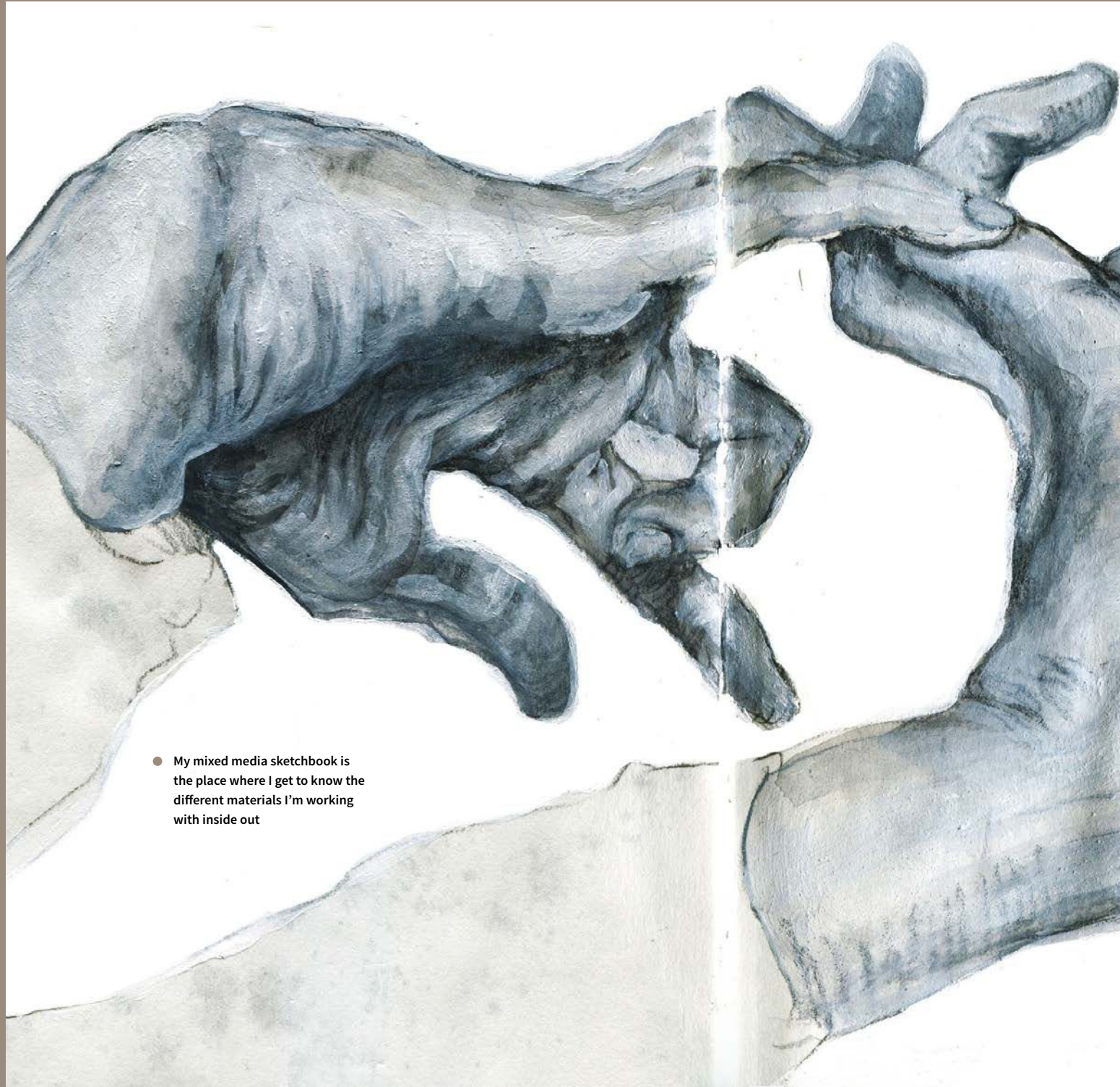
- This is a pencil study in which I figured out the arrangement of objects in detail before moving on to the final painting



- Whenever I just let my mind wander the result often turns out to be a fairy with fantastic hair as demonstrated in this little five minute sketch



- When I sketch from imagination I sometimes like to use themes, so I don't have to think too much about what I am going to draw next. Here is the first of a series of dryad sketches



- My mixed media sketchbook is the place where I get to know the different materials I'm working with inside out

PRO TIP

Sketch like nobody's looking

As we increasingly share more about our art making process (probably a personal experience for many) – in an effort to interact and connect with fans, peers, and possible clients, to build a community and to stay relevant – it can be difficult to shut out the real and imaginary audience and be creative just for yourself. It is much easier to mess up, experiment, and take risks knowing there won't be any witnesses, so it can be helpful to make sure you have some time and space available that you can use to safely flex your artistic muscles in private.

Half an hour a day

Every day I put aside thirty minutes to study one subject I want to get better at. Even on a busy day it is easy to find a way to squeeze in half an hour of drawing practice and it can be surprising how many hands, feet, and faces you can sketch in this relatively short amount of time. After a month filled with short, daily sessions I can be sure to have leveled up in this area of study. Usually I change themes every month to not get bored, but get back to them later to hone my skills.

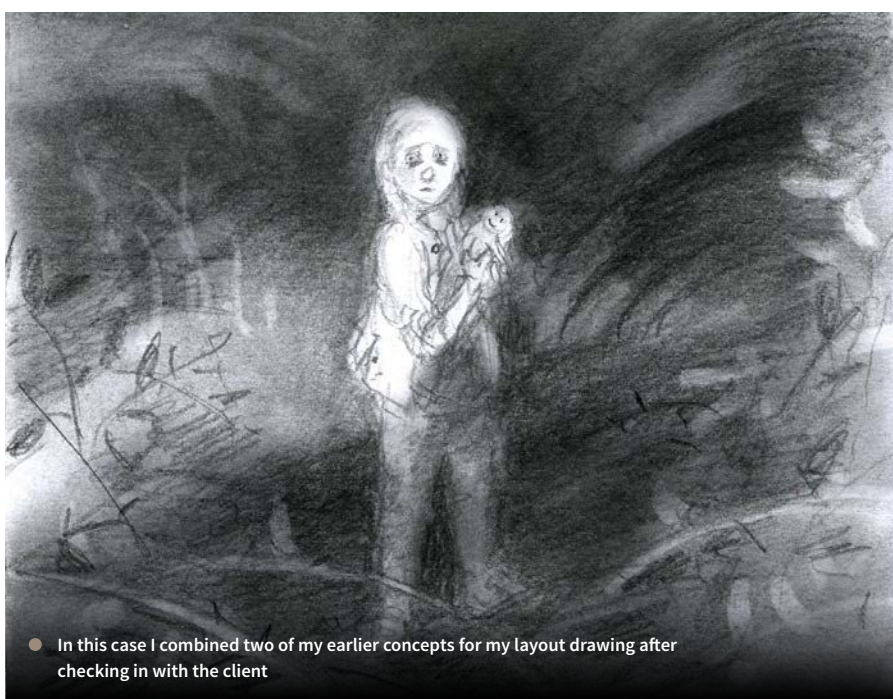


● As with these book cover concepts I often use Photoshop to play around with shapes and values once I know in which direction the illustration will go

Inspiration and ideas:

Being inspired is a matter of showing interest; everything has the potential to be inspiring, so I keep my eyes and ears open, am aware of my thoughts and feelings. Besides getting lost in nature once in a while, I try to consume a variety of different art forms whenever possible; literature, illustration, film, and theatre alike. As long as I consume experiences of one kind or another while giving my brain the time to process and find connections, ideas will eventually surface when I least expect it.

Once an idea gets a grip on me I'll scribble it down in my sketchbook. Depending on my excitement it will either be a quick reminder or several thumbnail compositions that try to find the best way for the picture to work. Most of these ideas never make it to the finished stage, but this way I am slowly establishing a library of concepts I can always go back to in less creative times. ►



● In this case I combined two of my earlier concepts for my layout drawing after checking in with the client

⚡ PRO TIP

Keeping your eyes open

There is a difference between passively and actively looking at things. Noting a tree in passing is not the same as taking the time to observe the way the leaves reflect the light or analyzing the different colors making up the shadows. You can learn a lot and find inspiration by engaging your mind with what is going on around you; learn to notice details. You can trace elements with imaginary lines to help you understand them, or quiet the part that sees the object and instead try to see the shapes, structures, and textures on their own.

⚡ JANA'S SIGNIFICANT ARTWORK

Monster

I created my *Monster* for the Month of Fear challenge in 2014. After a period of time struggling to find a direction for my work it shone like a beacon of, well, darkness. Still, submitting to the challenge was incredibly intimidating because it meant that my work would come under the scrutiny of artists I very much look up to and admire. I never anticipated the overwhelmingly positive feedback that followed. It pushed me to reevaluate my work and self perception, allowing me to see a value in my work I had not noticed before. Sometimes taking a step back and seeing your work the way somebody else would – free of all the preconceived notions you have of yourself – can be very powerful. The same year I took heart and submitted another Month of Fear piece to Spectrum; it got accepted!



“I saturate my brain with everything related to the subject in question and note down some ideas, then I’ll either sleep on it or do something else for a while”

Of course this process mostly applies to my personal work. Sometimes when you’re working to a deadline you just have to hunt an idea down. I saturate my brain with everything related to the subject in question and note down some ideas, then I’ll either sleep on it or do something else for a while. Once my subconscious has had time to do its work, it is time for some serious sketching; I not only utilize my prior thoughts and research, but let the sketches and concepts evolve on the page and play off each other.

Materials:

Graphite pencils will always be my favorite material to work with – the softer, the better. The skills I acquire doing simple pencil drawings are the backbone and foundation of all my work.

However, it’s just as important to me to try out as many different media as possible, so I have a broad palette to choose from when tackling a new project. Therefore, wildly experimenting is a key part of my development as an artist, including trying out different media such as different art supplies (store and brands alike) to figure out what materials I like working with and ways I can combine them.

Still, it’s only possible due to the groundwork that has been laid out with every cheap pencil drawing and scribble that has come before. While I never completely warmed up to digitally painting and drawing, it has become an integral part of my process.

I currently do most of my work traditionally, either in pencil or acrylics, charcoal, and pencils mixed media technique; however, I usually color and edit the image in Photoshop which results ►

- After the rough thumbnail stage I create a detailed graphite and pencil layout drawing to make sure I know all the elements are in the right place



- Sometimes I turn some of my pencil sketches into more elaborate watercolor studies. It's fun to explore one idea in different media



in a clean break during my working process, and allows me to reevaluate my artwork on screen with fresh eyes. Also, it allows the first half of my process to be as tactile and messy as I want it to be and the second half to have a cleaner, more analytical approach. So far it has proven to be a very flexible and efficient way of working.

“For me going to art school was an important step in my artistic development, mostly because it enabled me to spend time with like-minded people from different artistic backgrounds and on different skill levels”

Sketching techniques:

When it comes to drawing in my sketchbooks, I use everything that allows me to make marks on paper, in any way I can. There are no rules. Sometimes I scrawl illegibly all over a page in abstract doodles, also I might poke holes into the paper when I’m angry.

When I was younger I often wanted my sketchbook to be pretty, which made me afraid to actually draw just in case I would ruin the book or waste paper. I wanted an art book when what I needed was a tool.

I only started a healthy sketching habit after one of my first lessons at art school – a bad drawing is better than no drawing – once this had sunken in I started buying the cheapest

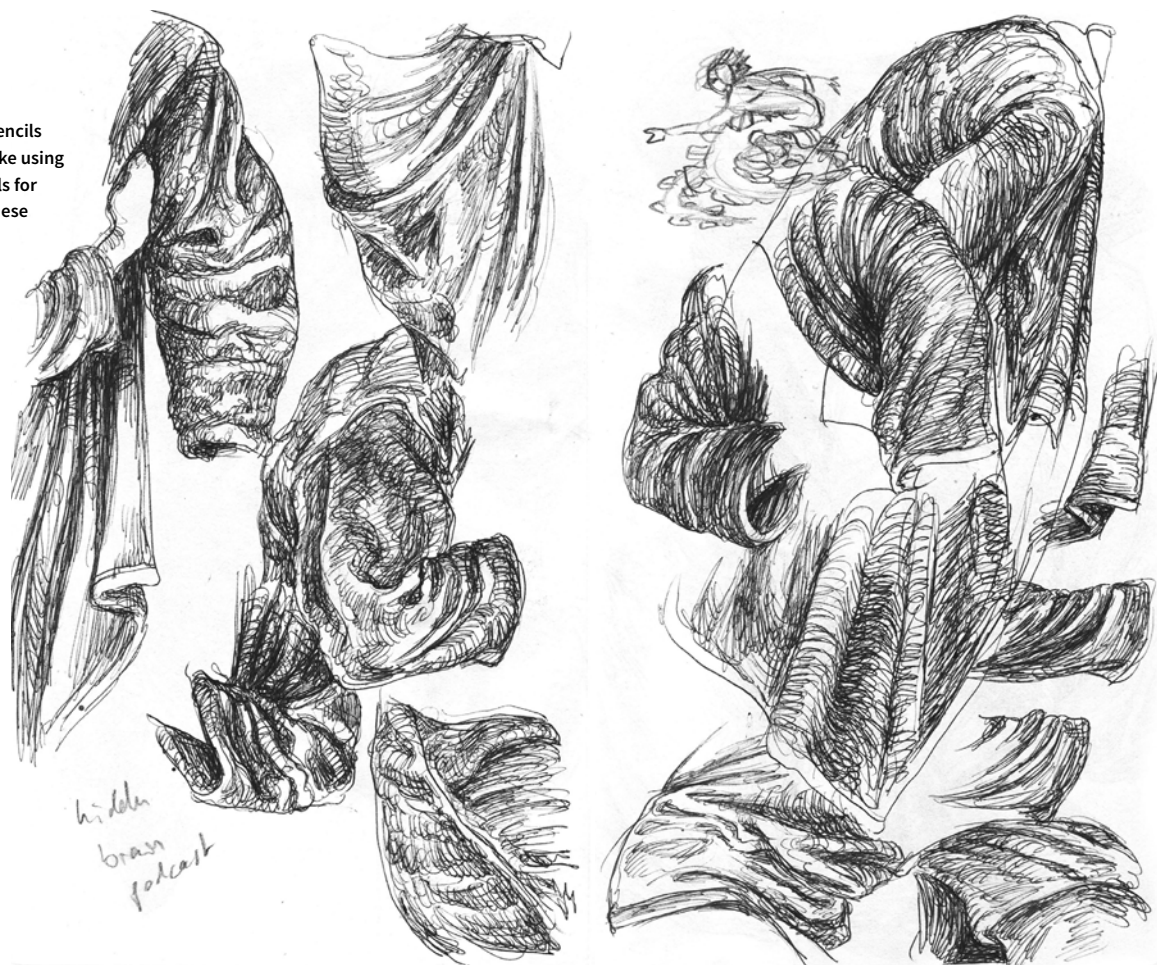
sketchbooks I could find and just “filled” it. For me going to art school was an important step in my artistic development, mostly because it enabled me to spend time with like-minded people from different artistic backgrounds and on different skill levels. While I would have practiced hard, art school or not – the huge amount of online resources and books available today would have helped me develop my skills – I doubt I would have taken the time to experiment and explore different possible directions for my art on my own.

Depending on your personality and circumstances, I don’t believe going to art school is necessary, you have to put in the work one way or another, and getting a degree is not akin to finding your artistic voice. ●

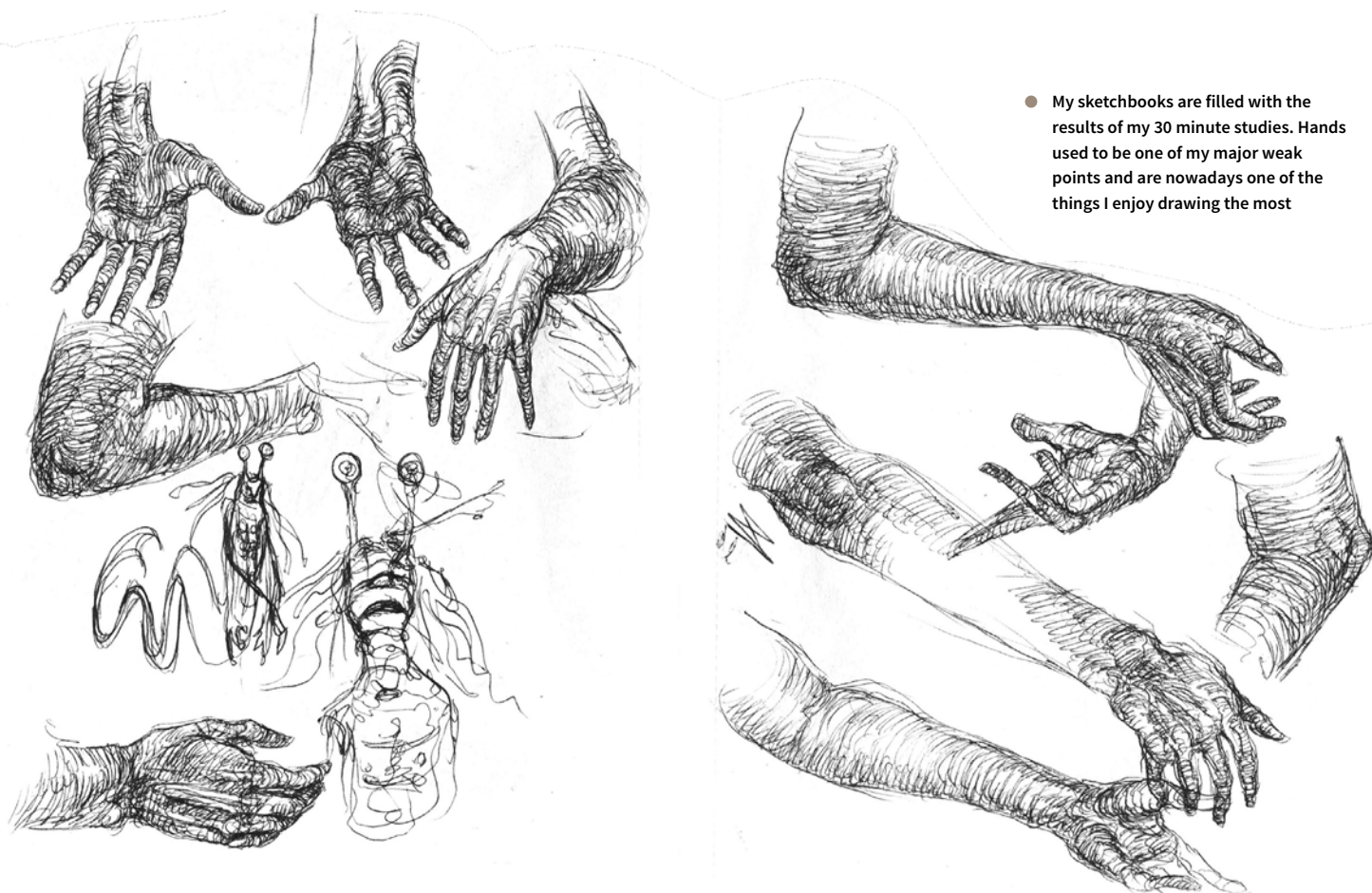
● I’m currently working in a sketchbook for watercolor pieces only. The foundation for these was images of an oddly textured tree in which I tried to recognize some familiar faces



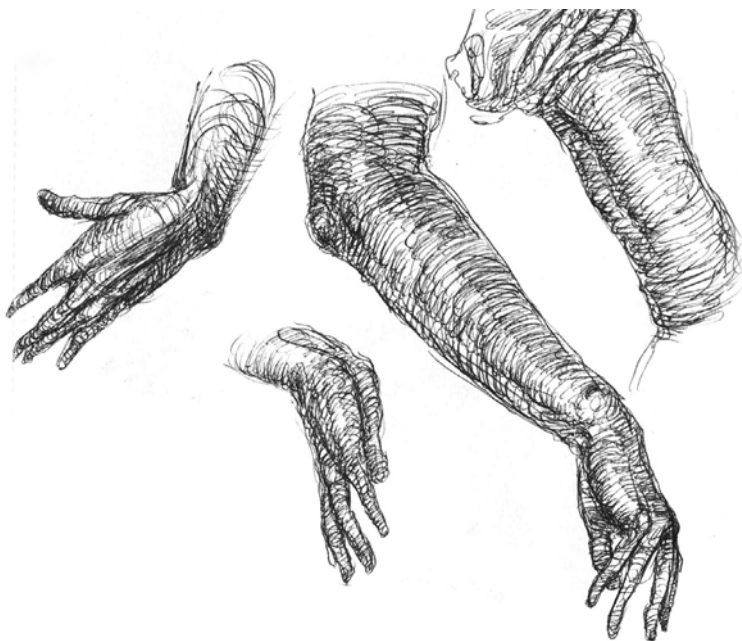
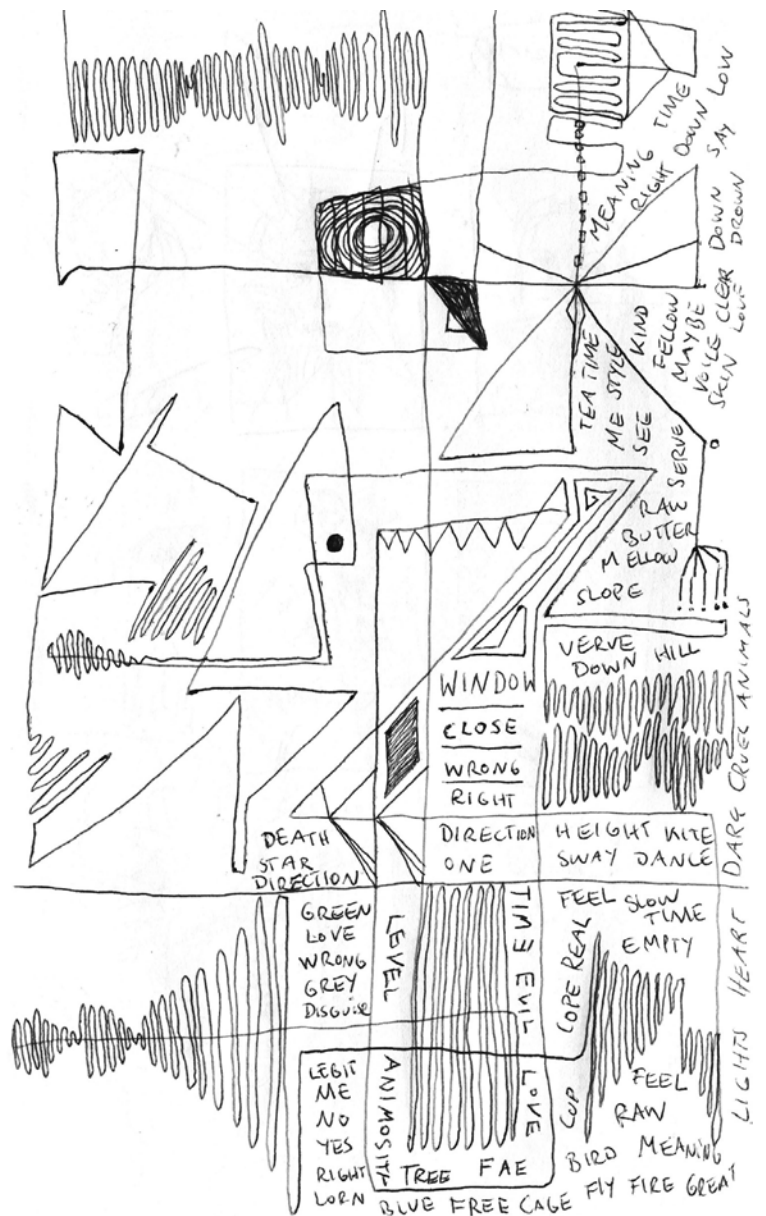
- While I mostly use soft pencils for finished artworks, I like using different pens and pencils for sketching as I did with these drapery studies



- My sketchbooks are filled with the results of my 30 minute studies. Hands used to be one of my major weak points and are nowadays one of the things I enjoy drawing the most



- Sometimes I need to fill my sketchbooks with abstract doodles and association chains. Besides being the place where I go to get my daily artist workout my sketchbooks have to suffer through my moods



Would you like to see your sketches featured in 2dartist magazine?

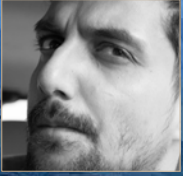
We're always on the lookout for talented artists and their artwork to adorn the pages of our magazine. If you think you have what it takes, get in touch!

To submit, simply email Annie at annie@3dtotal.com with a selection of your images or a link to your portfolio online, plus a little information about you.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Art Gallery

Each issue the 2dartist team selects 10 of the best digital images from around the world. Enjoy!



PLANET 47

NIYAS

Year created: 2016

Web: nyasck.com

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Submit your images! Simply email annie@3dtotal.com





On Leave

Gino Whitehall

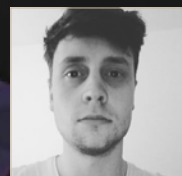
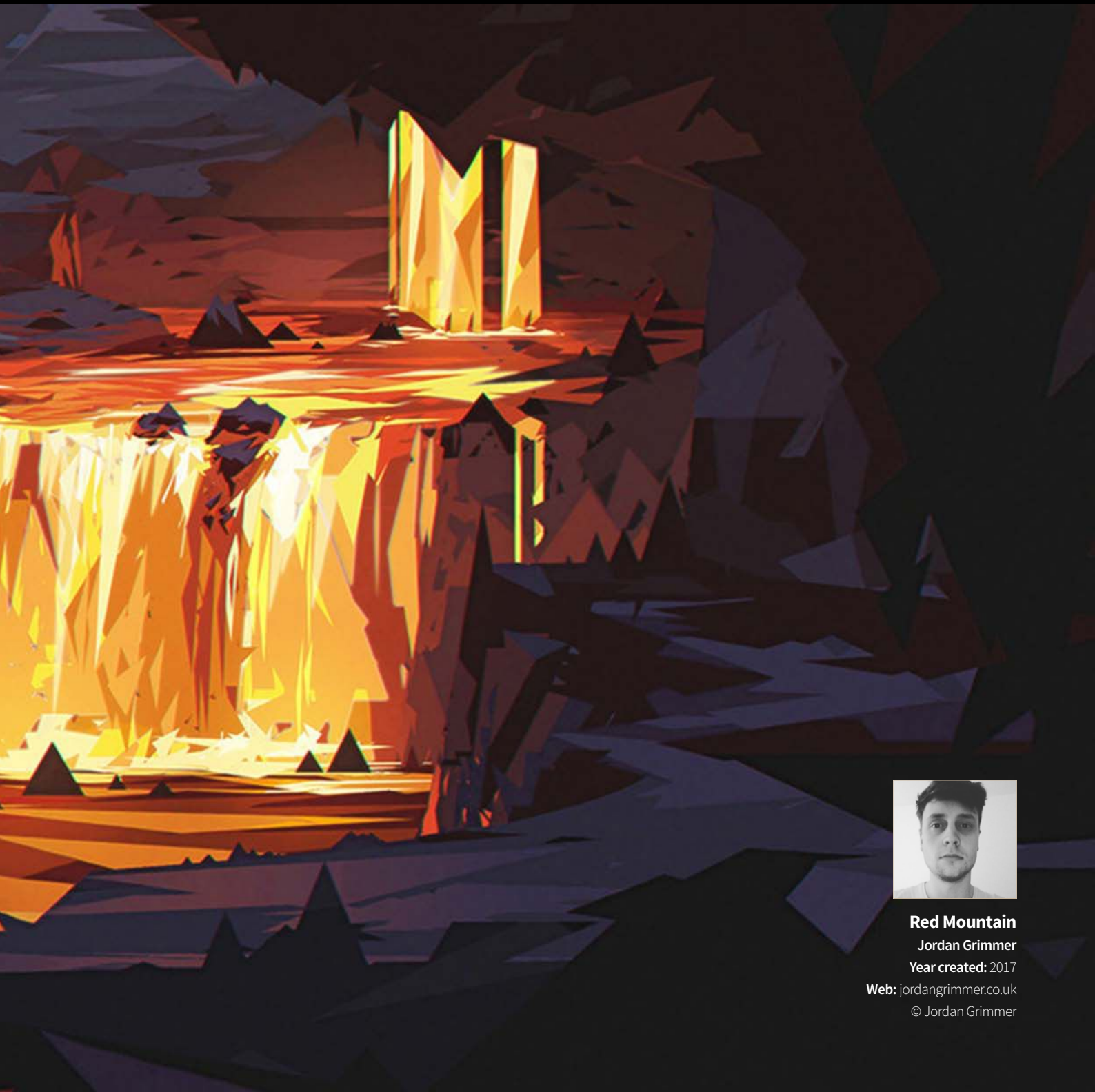
Year created: 2016

Web: artstation.com/artist/gwhitehall

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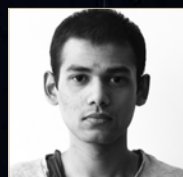
Red Mountain

Jordan Grimmer

Year created: 2017

Web: jordangrimmer.co.uk

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Deep [Sea] Love

Sudhan L.

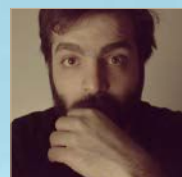
Year created: 2017

Web: artstation.com/artist/sudhanl

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Marz



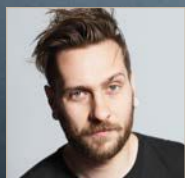
Sword

Mohammad Keivan Marz

Year created: 2017

Web: mohammadkeivan.artstation.com

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Ava

Marek Madej

Year created: 201

Web: artofmarekmadej.com

© Marek Madej



/ ^





Undead Attack

Max Duran

Year created: 2017

Web: artstation.com/artist/maxduran

© David Tilton

MAX DURAN





Structures

Samuel Smith

Year created: 2017

Web: samsamstudio.artstation.com

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Leaving the planet

Leon Tukker

Year created: 2017

Web: leontukker.artstation.com

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The Moscow courtyard

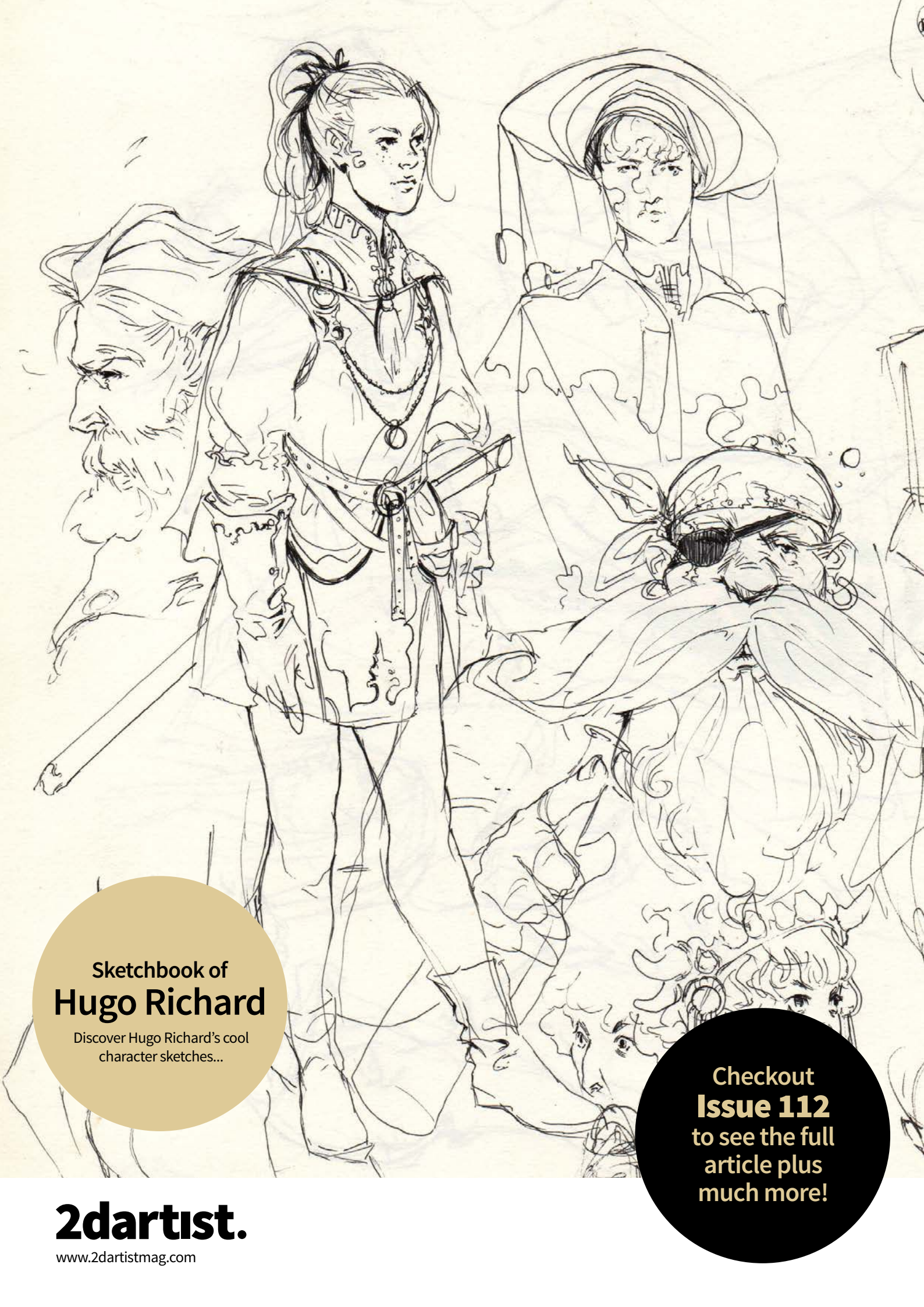
Lina Sidorova

Year created: 2017

Web: artstation.com/artist/linasidorova

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Sketchbook of
Hugo Richard

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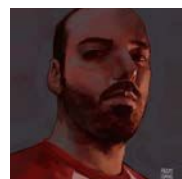


Speed paint an animal mech

Freelance illustrator Alex Olmedo shows you how to paint a futuristic animal mech using photo textures in Photoshop [▶](#)



The Artist



Alex Olmedo

alex_olmedo.artstation.com

Software Used:
Photoshop

Alex Olmedo is a freelance illustrator and concept artist based in Malaga, Spain. His work includes cover art for books and albums, as well as concept art for a number of diverse projects.

Learn how to speed paint a mechanized animal...

In this tutorial we will look at designing an animal mech, and I will go over some of my most useful techniques. Doing regular speed paintings is a great way to try out and practice new techniques, as well as improving your artwork. We will use a mixture of techniques including photo textures, Clipping Masks, and the Mixer brush to produce a painting in about two hours. I hope you find this tutorial engaging and that the tips and techniques help you to create your own masterpieces!

01 Inspiration and references: A step that many artists starting out forget is to find references before starting a new illustration. These references serve as both an inspiration for new designs and as a resource for the painting. For this tutorial we won't be looking at the typical mech animal, one that is fast, light, and aggressive, instead we will be designing something a bit coarser, larger, and slower. The first thing to do is to research big animals such as elephants, rhinos, and hippos, and maybe a few bears. I find it useful to have some of the references open in the same window as my canvas; it helps me to paint faster.

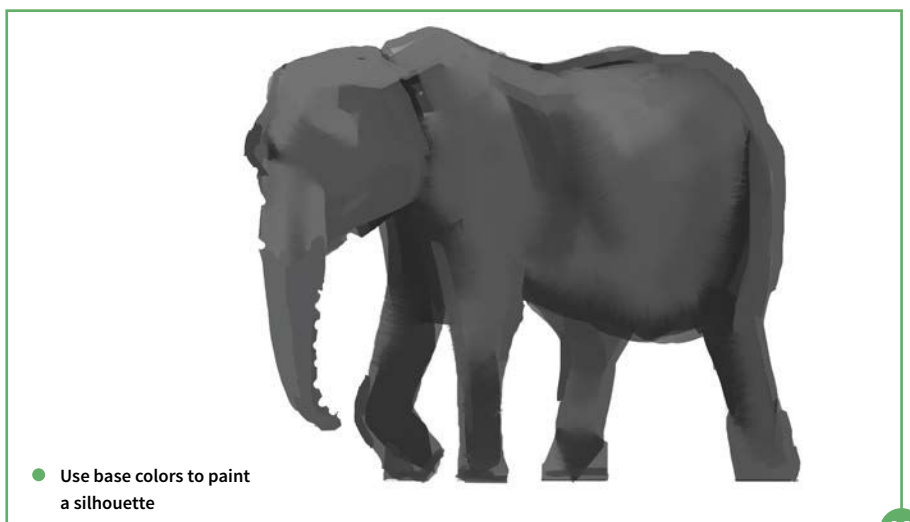
02 Sketch from reference: Once you have decided on the animal you want to design you can draw a rough sketch, you want to focus on getting the silhouette of the animal recognizable. In my process I like to make a silhouette by using large brushstrokes with a hard brush, set to 100% opacity. Starting with a silhouette and using it as a base layer will be beneficial in later steps. I recommend you use the eraser tool to contour and build up the silhouette, as well as a light and dark shade of base color to add volume and depth to your animal. Use big opaque brushstrokes and blend them together with the smudge tool.

03 Mech references: To help with the design do another round of research, this time you want to look for mechanical elements, textures, or machines. Photobash.org is one of my favorite websites to find great references while avoiding any copyright problems when using them in my work. Unlike other websites, here you can find a huge range of photo packages in high definition specifically designed for illustrators and



● Take the time to research your chosen animal

01



● Use base colors to paint a silhouette

02



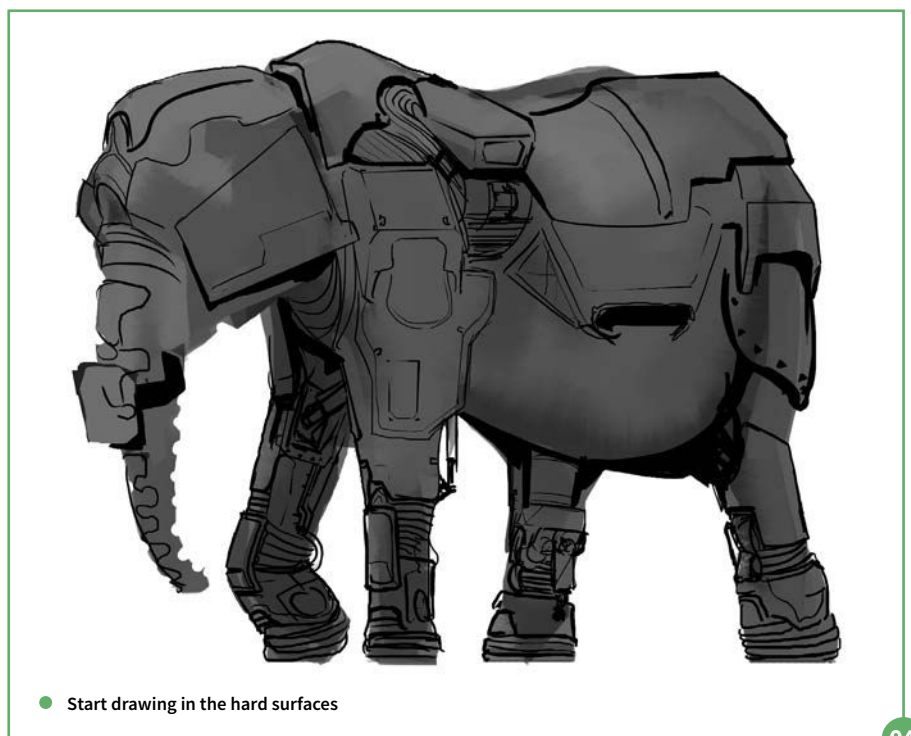
● Do a second round of research to find mechanical textures

03

concept designers. Look for photos that will best fit your idea; you want to select photos that speed up your painting process.

04 **Line drawing:** An essential aspect of designing a sci-fi or industrial design is the hard surfaces. The characteristic of vertices, smooth faces, and geometric forms is given by each material the machine is made of. Using your references, start drawing the hard surfaces of your mech. Try to keep the functionality of the design in mind when drawing and use the silhouette to guide you. You can draw panels and structures that will act as protection, as well as frameworks and other mechanical parts.

It is good to play a little with the contrast creating more volume and attractiveness in the design. I used a hard triangle-shaped brush with the Shape Dynamics turned on. A top tip is to pulse the Shift key to make straight lines when painting.



● Start drawing in the hard surfaces

04

⚡ PRO TIPS

Don't forget the base

A problem that many people have when changing from traditional drawing to digital is usually forgetting the most important, the base. We have so many options and so many ways to repair what's spoiled that we forget how easy it looked when we did it in pencil on paper. Therefore, keep the base in mind. Focus on the composition, the masses of volume, and go from the general to the detailed. Do not abuse the zoom and do not complicate – soon using digital media will become natural and you will quickly notice the improvement.

“As we are designing a large, slow mech it is a good idea to think about what it would be used for”

05 **Design and purpose:** I think one of the most useful pieces of advice I can offer you is when you are creating any illustration, you should try to give meaning or a narrative to the image. Whether you make a character, a landscape, or a creature, it is very important that the different elements you add are not only for aesthetic purposes, but also have a clear purpose. As we are designing a large, slow mech it is a good idea to think about what it would be used for.

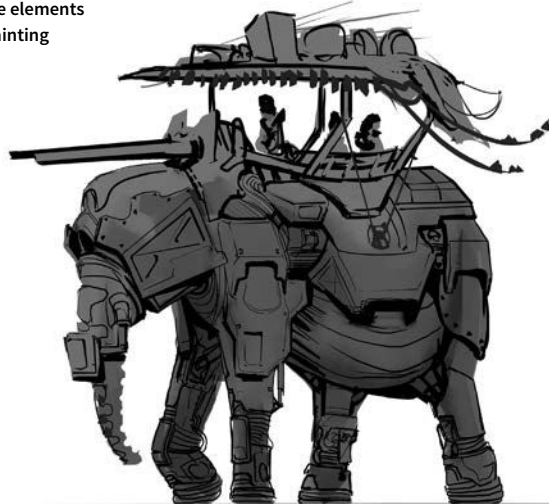
I decide that my elephant is a cargo machine for carrying troops and armaments, which means that I need to include these elements in the design. This is also a good stage to think about the theme and look of the final image. You could design something based on your animal's natural habitat or something completely different. I decide to stick with the Savannah that many elephants inhabit. I also include some tribal elements to go for a look that is more fantasy than sci-fi.

06 **First texture/color pass:** This is where you can make use of the base layer silhouette you created in Step 2. You can use Clipping Masks layers on top of this base to add texture and colors. Masks will really help to speed up this process by only affecting the pixels in the layer below the mask so you don't affect the whole image, just the areas you want to paint or texture.

To make a Clipping Mask, create a new layer (Shift+Ctrl+N) and use the pointer of the mouse to click between the layers. To speed up the process take pieces of the different photos to give textures, details, and color to the mech; I usually use Lighting mode for light areas and Overlay mode for the rest.

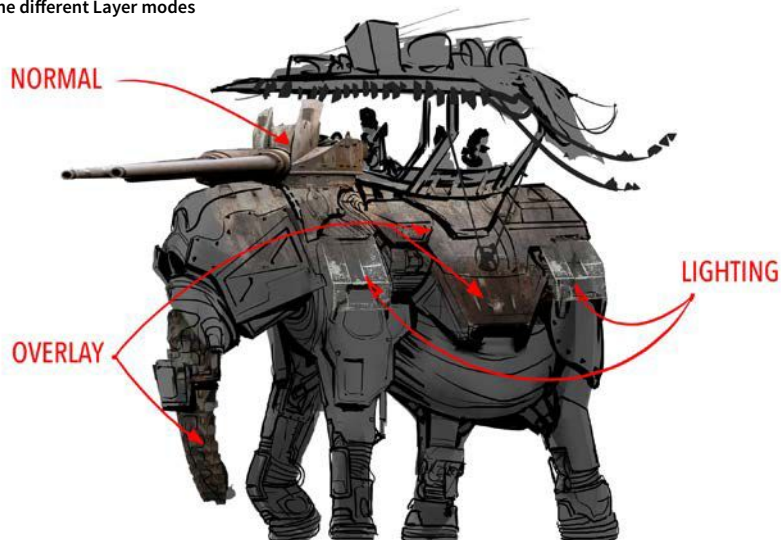
07 **Retouching photos:** Sometimes you can't find the picture or texture that you want to fit the drawing, either because the colors, lighting, contrast, or even perspective don't match. There are many different methods to correct these issues but I try not to do anything over complicated because it often takes time, which I don't have when speed painting. By combining the basic adjustments

- Adding extra narrative elements will help to sell the painting

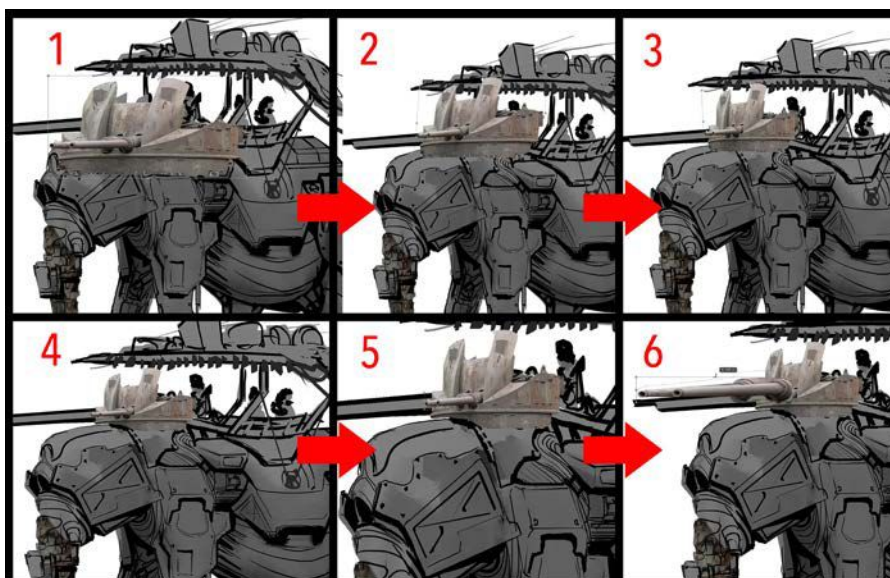


05

- An example of how and where to use the different Layer modes



06



- Adjusting the size and perspective of a photo

07

⚡ PRO TIPS

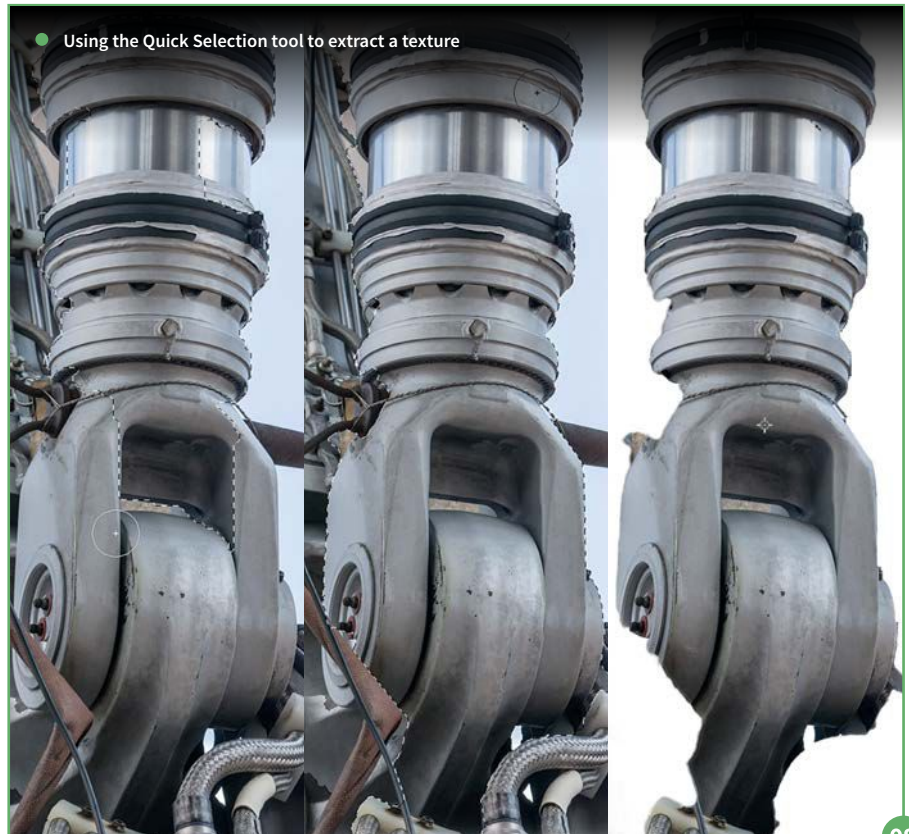
Create contrast

Contrast is something we can achieve in many ways. But we must bear in mind that the points of maximum contrast in the image will be the most striking, so it is important to know where and how to add more contrast to one zone or another. It is advisable to focus on the contrast of your focal point; this is achieved by giving more variety of color using complementary colors. For example you could add more saturation, more light and dark shapes, or more textures, in short anything that can give prominence to your focal point.

options with the Free Transformation tool (Ctrl+T) you can cheat almost any image. Obviously knowing which to choose is a matter of practice, and almost always is a combination of various adjustments.

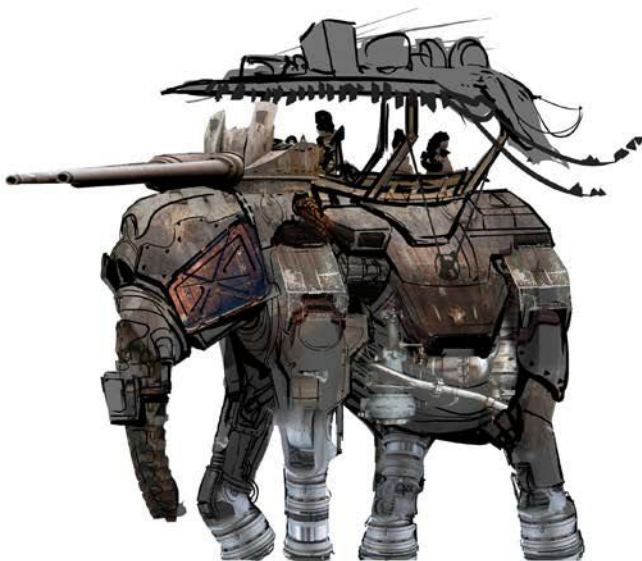
08 Selecting textures: It is important is to include textures in your paintings, as is knowing how to choose and extract them. As in the previous step, Photoshop has a myriad of selection tools that can make the job easier. The selection tool I favor is the Quick Selection tool (hold down Magic Wand button); it is not perfect, but is very useful and fast. In fact, with it and the Lasso tool (L) I can select the vast majority of my textures. I use it all the time, even to copy and paste some parts of my illustration, or to make quick selection to paint in a single layer.

09 More functional parts: When you add textures to the areas of your animal where the light will hit and create highlights, use the Lighting Mode layers because it will highlight the shine and reflections of ►

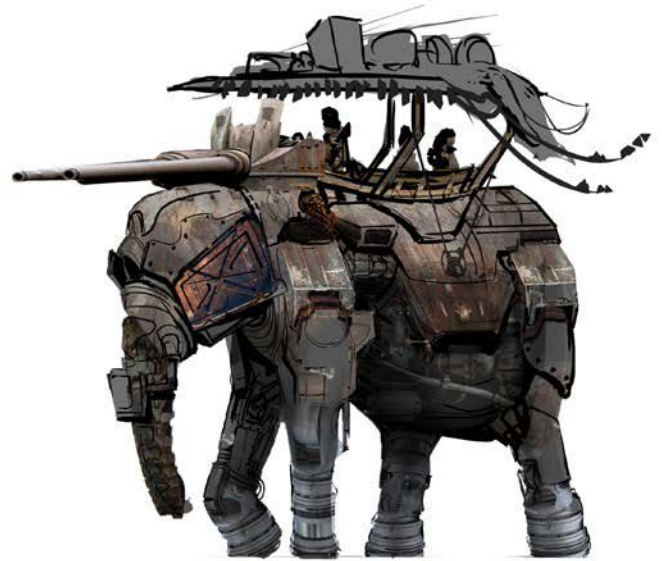


● Using the Quick Selection tool to extract a texture

08



LIGHTING LAYER MODE FOR TEXTURES



MULTIPLY LAYER MODE FOR SHADOWS

● Adding highlights and shadows to your textures

09

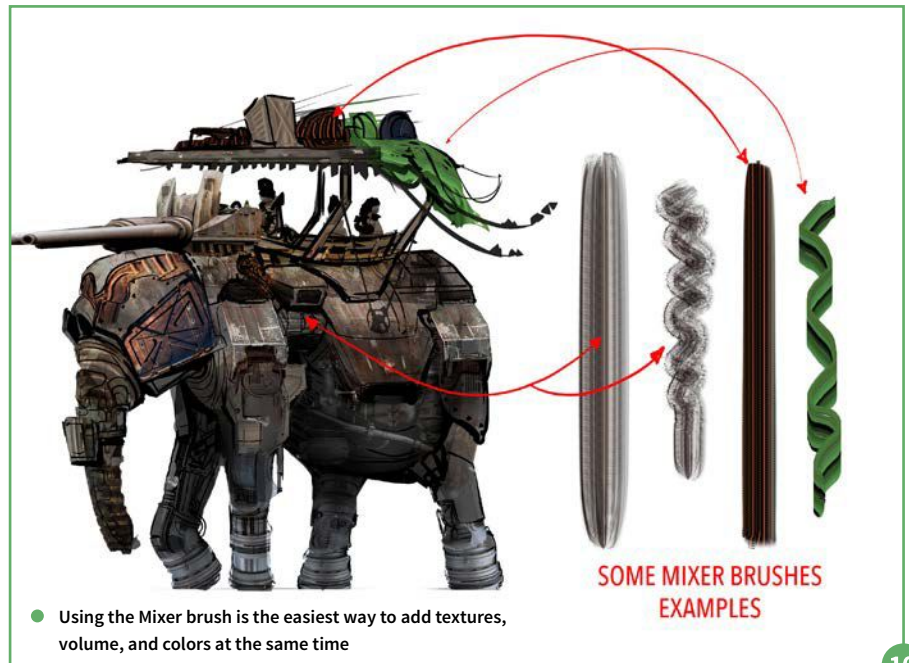
the photos. Duplicate and adjust the position and perspective of each photo using the Free Transformation tool to build up the texture on the mech. Then on a new layer use a soft brush with low opacity set to Multiply Mode to paint in some shadows to fuse the textures with the drawing, making it more believable.

10 Mixer brush part 1: I love using the Mixer brush; depending on the brush or the settings you choose, it can be used for thousands of things. In this case use it to paint more textures and colors between the texture layers to better blend the photos together. You can also add some color and detail to the objects on other areas of your mech; in my case I add things to the top of the canopy. Thanks to the Mixer brush you can give volume and texture with a single stroke. It is not an easy brush to get to know but with practice it will become one of your best friends.

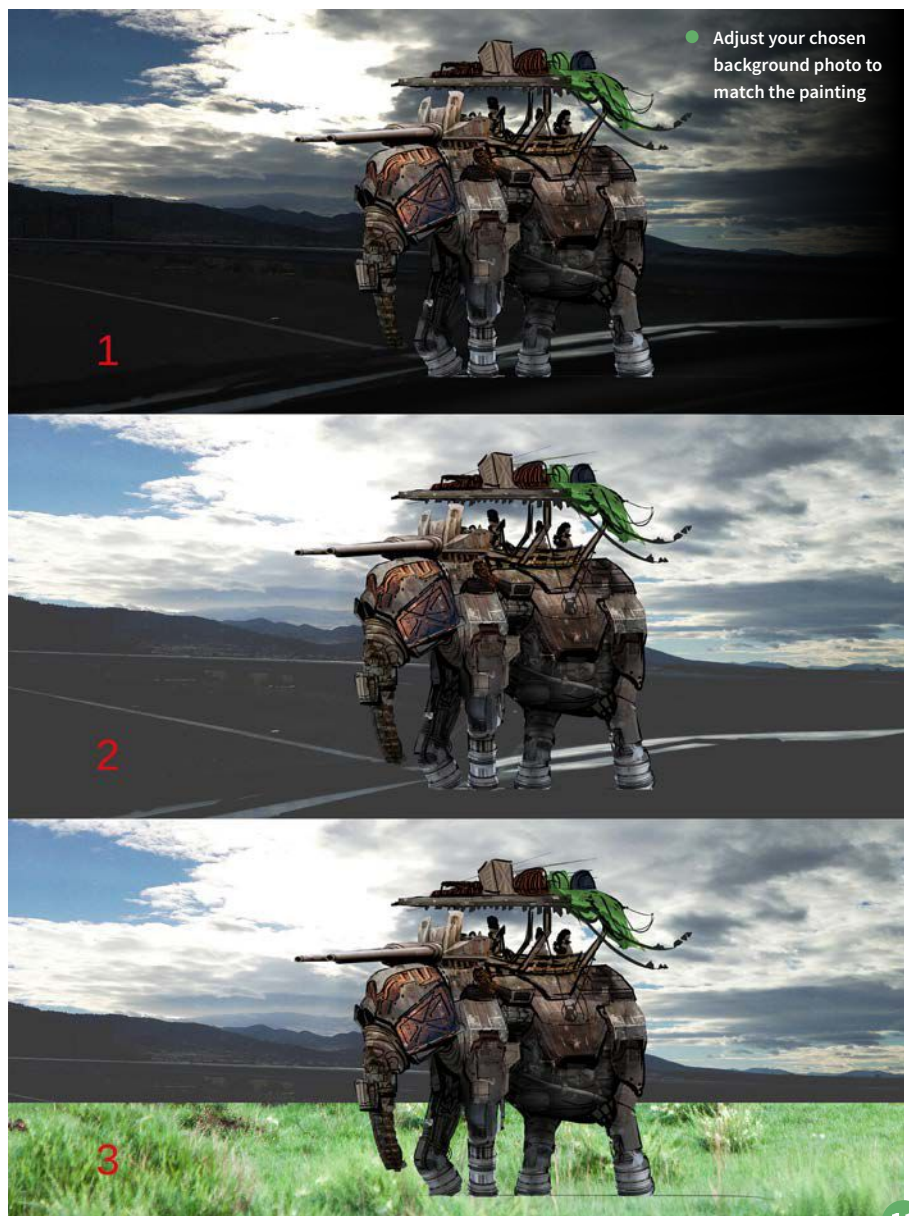
“One of my favorite moments during the speed painting process is when I just paint, without worrying about details, only adding brushstrokes here and there”

11 Background: The lighting on your mech should be neutral up to this point so that you don't become distracted while texturing the mech. Now it is time to leave the mech and focus on the environment and lighting. To save yourself time you can take a photo using your camera or smartphone of the lighting set up you want to use. Once you have your photo you can play with the Brightness and Levels to adjust it to suit your scene. To make the ground you can copy, paste, and transform another photo of your chosen environment – mine is taken from the original elephant picture to create a grassy field.

12 Mixer brush part 2: One of my favorite moments during the speed painting process is when I just paint, without worrying about details, only adding brushstrokes here and there. For this the technique it is more practical to once again use the Mixer brush. By sampling different parts of the photos you will obtain a variety of colors and textures, and if you use these with different brushes you will be able to create all kinds of effects, from tall grass to distant flowers. You want to integrate the base photo into the painting so that it



10



11

looks as if it has always been part of it, not something you shoved in at the last minute.

13 **Blending together:** Since the main elements are done, it is time to merge them together and make them look like they are all part of the same image and not a collage of photos without meaning. The first thing you need to fix is the burnt white of the sky, so with a soft brush and a sample bluish color from the background, you can create a layer of atmospheric perspective.

With it you will get more depth into the scene, in addition to merging the different photos elements to create a more cohesive image. It is worthwhile creating another layer on top of your animal mech to integrate it into the rest of the image.

14 **Lights and colors:** You probably don't have time to spare to make corrections and erasing things, so group all the parts of your mech, copy it and merge the layers to create a flat version you can paint on to.

Using brushes in modes such as Multiply or Color Dodge, select blue colors from the same image and create ambient lighting on top of this, as well as some green highlights to show



● Making grass with the Mixer brush is really relaxing and enjoyable

reflections from the grass. Also, paint in and emphasize shaded areas to show the cast shadow of the mech. If you have added people to your illustration to enhance the narrative you should make sure you remember to spend a little time integrating them into the scene. As a final touch create a layer at 50% gray, set to Overlay mode and then apply a Grainy filter creating a

bit of noise in the image that will bring all the colors together, giving uniformity and a more beautiful finish to the design. I tend to switch down the opacity of this layer to under 20%.

With those final touches we have finished our animal mech speed paint. I hope you enjoyed this tutorial and found it useful. See you guys! ●



● Adding some atmospheric perspective between the objects adds depth to your illustration

13

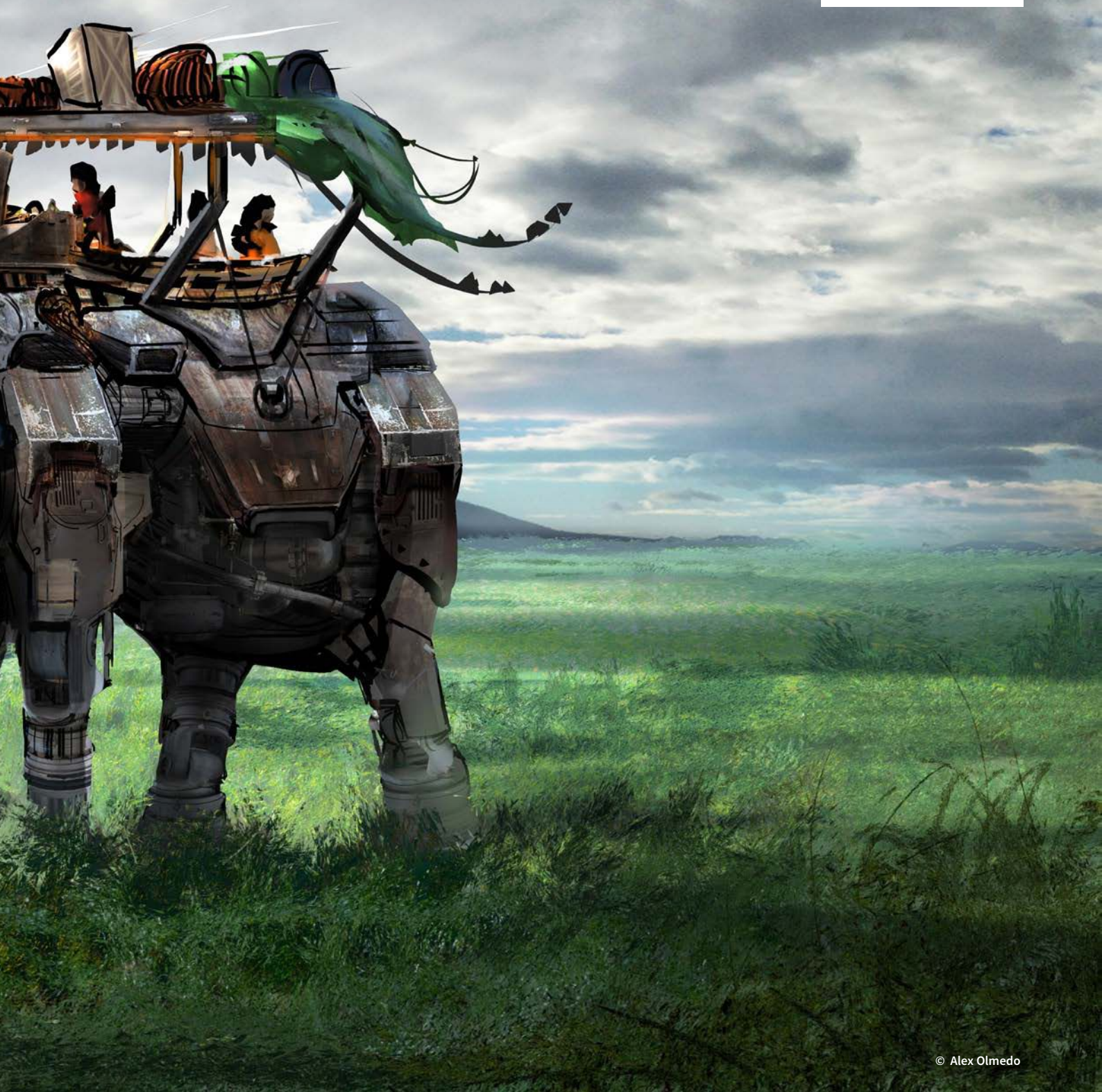


The Artist



Alex Olmedo

alex_olmedo.artstation.com



© Alex Olmedo



Fantasy fundamentals: values

James Wolf Strehle continues his series by showing how to use values to enhance your artworks and draw attention to focal points ▶



The Artist



James Wolf Strehle
patreon.com/jameswolf

Software Used:
Photoshop

James is a concept artist and illustrator in the games industry. He works for Volta where he is afforded the opportunity to create art for some of the biggest games in the industry.

See how values can improve the three-dimensionality of your scene...

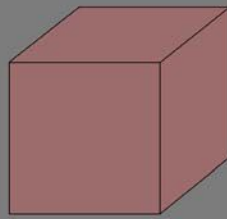
In part three of this five part series on the fundamental aspects of creating a compelling fantasy image, we are going to focus on value! So far in this series we have laid out the composition for a new image “The Grave Robber”, and corrected the perspective. Now it is time to work out how the lighting will work in the scene. Value is an important fundamental element and in this article I will explain why! I will discuss such topics as volume, textures, shading, and explain how properly lighting the scene will ultimately lead to a more successful painting!

01 What is value?: To put it simply; value represents the lightness or darkness of a color. It defines the light in a work of art and allows you to make sense of the scene. Without it you cannot distinguish objects within the scene or how they relate to each other. It is what tricks the mind into believing the robber in this composition is closer to us than the skeleton even though we know it is only a 2D plane. Value helps you to decipher whether an object is three dimensional or flat; it defines the textures, allowing you to understand what material the object is made of, and it portrays the light and how bright that light will be in the scene. In image 01 you can see how value impacts an image and how fundamentally important it is.

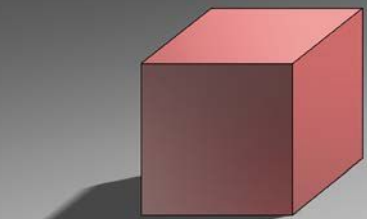
02 Making values work for you: Being able to control values in your painting is one of the most important fundamentals in creating a work of art. Its usefulness is wide ranging; it allows you to direct the viewer's eyes, or set up the lighting and atmosphere, and even helps with detail oriented tasks like giving objects volume and texture. The challenge of value is being able to juggle these elements all at once.

A common example would be to focus too heavily on one aspect such as texturing, only to realize that you have overdone it and have compromised the overall value scheme. To help remedy this I like to work in stages. I start out with the base value ranges and points of interest, and then once I am satisfied I switch to giving volume to the shapes. Once all that is done I flood the scene with texture. This “one step at a time” approach prevents you from

- Without value it is hard to distinguish the cube from the background, even though the cube is a different color



without value



with value

01



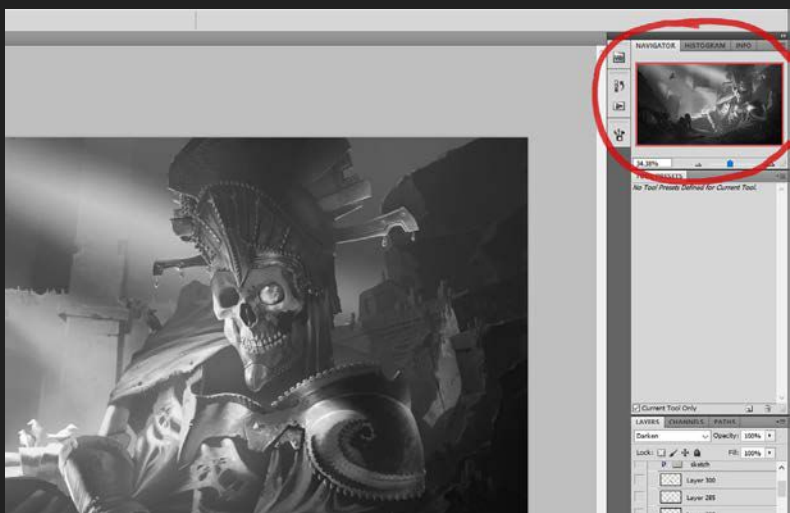
- By separating aspects of value it becomes far more manageable, allowing you to focus on one task at a time

02

PRO TIPS Taking a step back

It is very important to step back and take in the image as a whole. Are the values still playing nicely together? Is there a texture that is drawing too much attention? I zoom in and out of my work habitually to ensure no single element is going rogue.

Another way to give you a fresh view is to flip the image. Not only will flaws be more obvious but you may catch something that you were not even aware of to begin with. Lastly, I like to have the navigator window open at all times. This acts as a mini preview that I can check as I paint.





03



04

getting overwhelmed and allows you to devote your full attention to one aspect at a time.

03 Defining shapes: It is very helpful to block out your shapes early on so you can get a preliminary look at what the final outcome may be. At this stage you can easily adjust and tweak your values until they feel right and also achieves the goals of your vision. You want to set up your scene so that it has a

clear interest point, with all of the elements appropriately readable, and the scene as a whole is harmonious and pleasing to look at.

For beginners it may seem difficult figuring out when something is harmonious but do not let it intimidate you. Basically you just want your eyes to flow calmly throughout the image. If your eyes are darting back and forth and you are having trouble focusing on

the various elements of the scene then there is a good chance that it is not harmonious! Fortunately we are only in the simple shapes stage so you can easily change it if need be.

04 Where to place contrast: Contrast is an effective means of bringing attention to particular sections of an image. The difference between the light and dark areas will draw your eyes so make sure you place your contrast ►

carefully. An improperly placed point of contrast can be very distracting and ruin the flow you are trying to create. In image 04 you can see how damaging it can be when used haphazardly.

By creating too much contrast between the foreground and skeleton I have formed a jarring line that pulls your eyes right off the page. I want the attention on the skeleton so instead I decide to place the highest amount of contrast around his face and chest. It is the only region in the scene with bright whites. It also has the largest gap between lights and darks, the bright bleached bones contrast against the dark hollow holes within the body and armor.

05 Creating a value scale: As you move forward with your piece you want to start developing a value scale. This is basically the range of values that are encompassed within the scene. You want to try and assign a group of values for each of your various elements. This will help to organize your image and make it easier to comprehend.

Generally the foreground will have the largest range of values and as you head further back into space that range will diminish. In the image I'm creating here the foreground, mid-ground, and background are all in their own value scales. The foreground is grouped in mostly darks, the skeleton in the mid-ground (which is the most important part of the scene) is grouped with mid-darks all the way up to white, and the background is limited to grays of similar value. If you have trouble sticking with your desired values, you can create a temporary value scale on a separate layer for reference.

“Value deals directly with light, and volume defines the lighting on an object within a given scene”

06 Adding volume: Volume is one of the pillars of value. Value deals directly with light, and volume defines the lighting on an object within a given scene. It imbues it with a sense of three-dimensionality. It is important to understand light and how it affects various materials when giving an object volume. If you don't, then this step will be challenging. To help, artists use references to aid them.

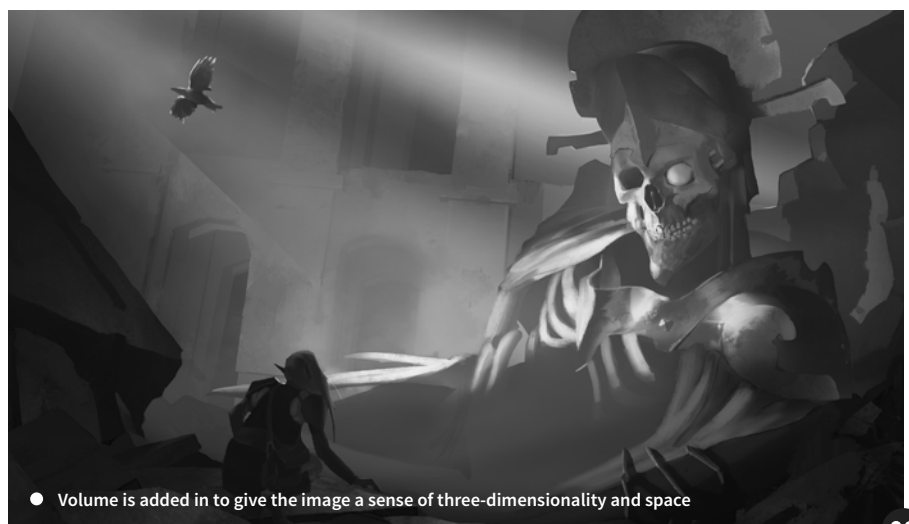
⚡ PRO TIPS

Using Lighten and Darken layers

If a value is standing out a little too much you can use the Lighten or Darken layers to tone them down. This can be much easier than repainting a section that has already been detailed. If the painting is in the beginning stages it is probably best to repaint it but a lot of the time I will have a Lighten or Darken layer on top of everything for some final tweaks. If you have selections saved of the base shapes from earlier on in the painting, it can be a simple matter of color picking and filling it in.



05



06



07

One of the challenges of volume is making sure you stick to your value scales. It is easy to lose track and end up with improper contrast, mismanaged edges, and distracting textures. Be mindful of what you are doing and always take a step back to make sure you are not heading off course. I like to go over the image with an initial rough-in of volume to make sure I like the direction. If I do then I head back in for a second round of rendering.

07 Laying down shadows: Although similar to volume, shading helps to place an object in space and support the direction of the lighting. Generally objects look “floaty” until you ground them with a shadow. In “The Grave Robber” I am experiencing this very issue with the cape. By dropping a shadow onto the ribs below the cape you can now understand its place in space a little better. Shadows are pivotal indicators of the direction the light is falling. You will rarely see a strong highlight without some sort of shadow to compliment it.

“I implement Overlay layers to aid me in textural work because many of them preserve the layers underneath”

08 Adding texture: Texture can be an unwieldy beast if not properly controlled! You do not want to ruin all the hard work you did fleshing out the volumes and ►



08

you certainly don't want to make it so strong that it upsets your carefully planned points of interest. I find it best to have a delicate and purposeful stroke. Often I implement Overlay layers to aid me in textural work because many of them preserve the layers underneath.

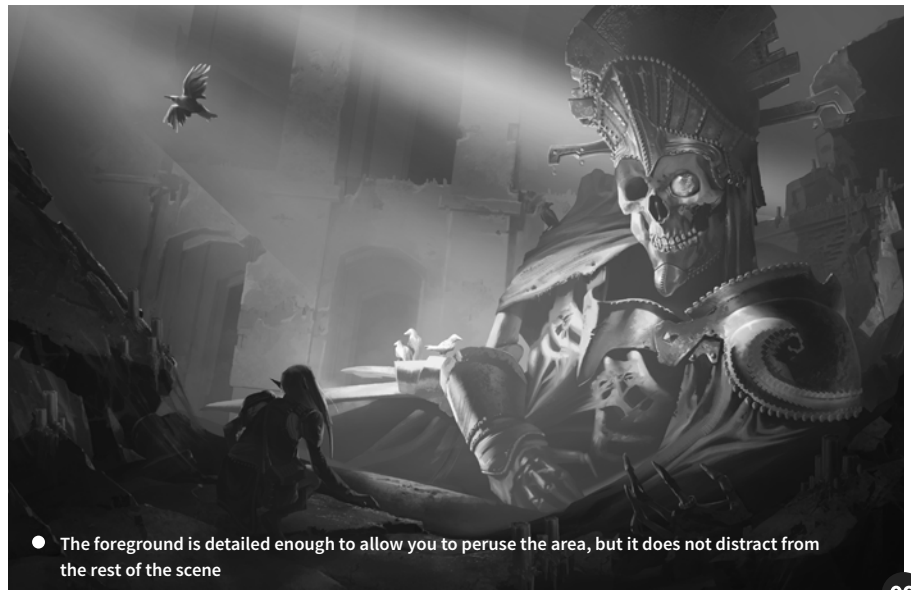
I also use the Mixer brush and sample similar portions of the painting to ensure I am keeping to the same value scale that I have chosen for the given area. Defining texture is an important part of value because it explains how a specific material reacts to light in a way that color simply cannot.

09 Selective detailing: Things are coming along nicely with the skeleton and it is time to start spreading the details throughout the image. As I mentioned in the perspective article, it is important to be selective with your details. As I paint the foreground I make sure I add enough for the viewers to understand the space and its materials. At the same time I have to ensure that it is not enough to pull attention away from the skeleton and hinder the story aspects.

Although it is true that the foreground is capable of having the highest contrast range, you have to be smart about it. If the gleam of an object should technically outshine the main focal point you need to make a decision as to whether the accuracy of the gleam is crucial enough to compete with the importance of the story elements. Ultimately the story you are trying to tell should outweigh the technical details.

10 Final tweaks: Now that the values are all in place and the overall image reads well it is time to take a step back to reflect. You want to make sure that the right parts of the scene are grabbing your attention and that there are no distracting visual hiccups.

After looking through the image I have noticed a few areas that have lost their presence. The crown for example has become dull and hard to read. The background has also become a bit monotonous and no longer has the ability to direct the eyes towards the skull as I originally intended. I always have the early stages of an artwork saved so I can look back and compare. Sometimes it is easy to lose track of the original vision you had in mind so having the previous concept handy is very helpful. ●



- The foreground is detailed enough to allow you to peruse the area, but it does not distract from the rest of the scene

09

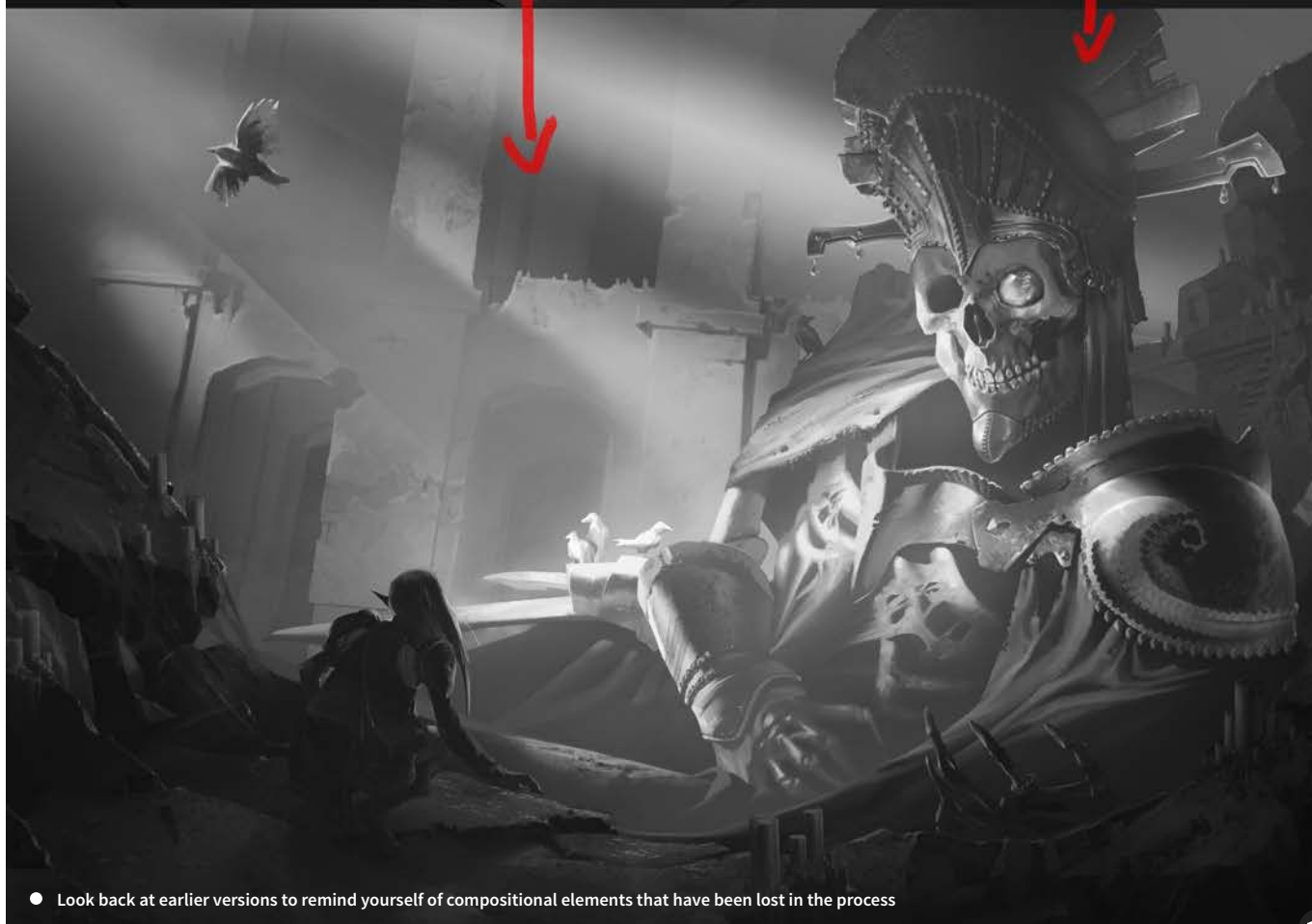


PRO TIPS

Adjusting with Levels and Curves

The Levels and Curves tools are something I use regularly. They are powerful tools when it comes to tonal control. If a section is not working you can hit Ctrl+L to lighten, darken, improve the contrast or even tone it down. For even more control, open the Curves panel where you can adjust multiple values at once. Using these tools I brighten up the foreground, making it easier to see. Keep an eye on your image while editing though because if you are not paying attention it is very easy to go overboard, and you will lose all of those subtle details you worked so hard on.





- Look back at earlier versions to remind yourself of compositional elements that have been lost in the process



The Artist



James Wolf Strehle
patreon.com/jameswolf





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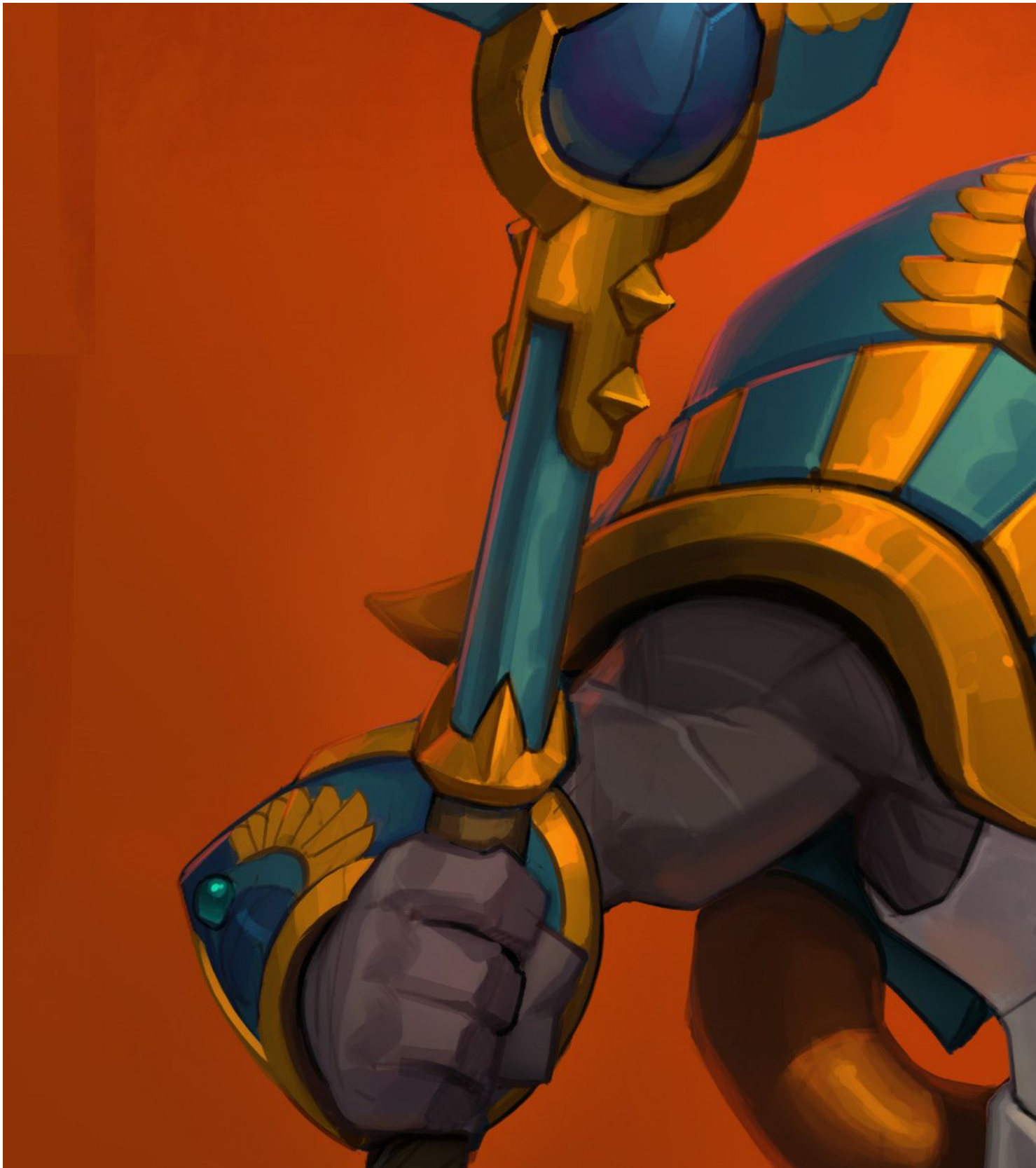
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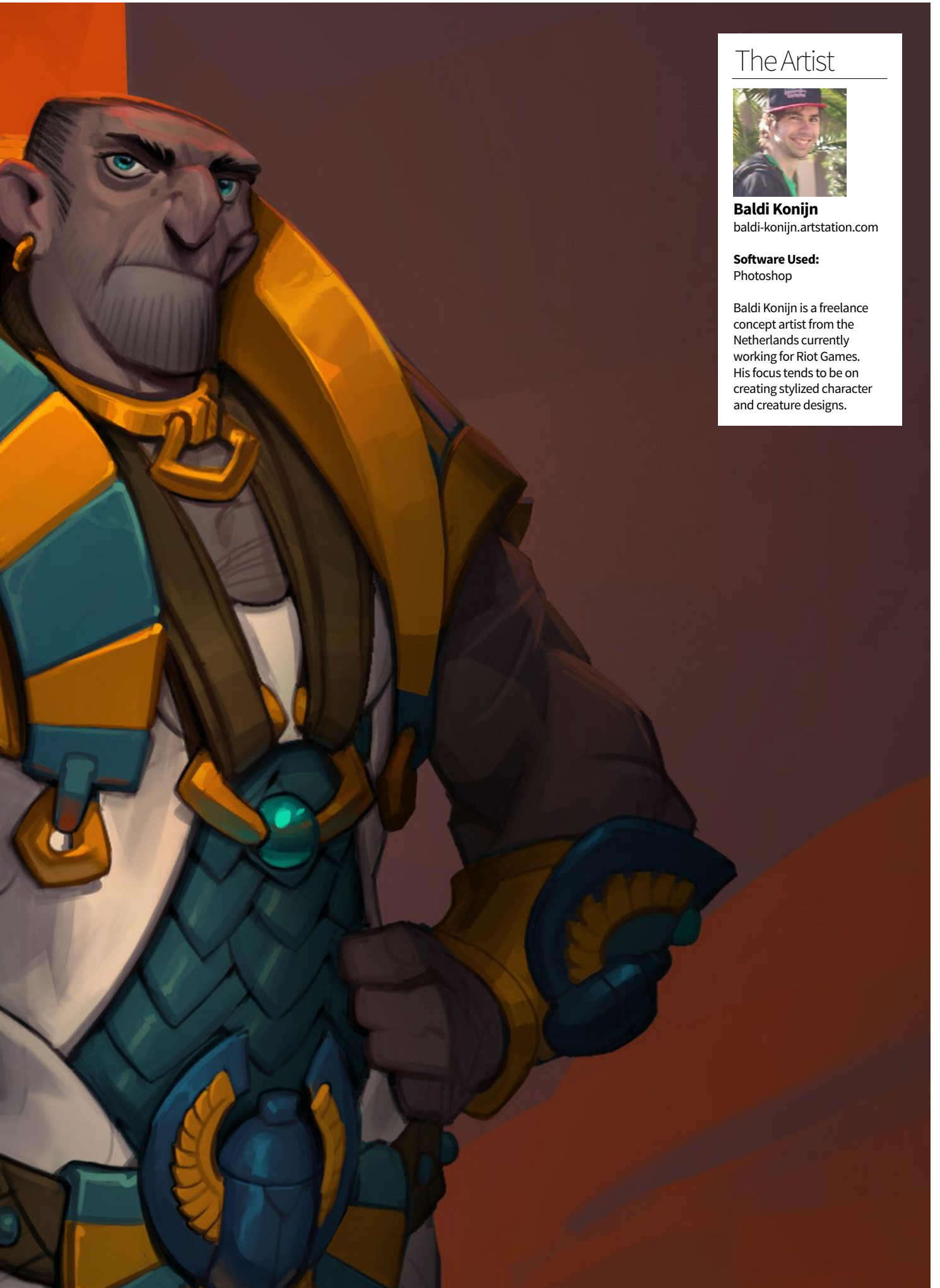
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Paint a stylized Egyptian guard

Baldi Konijn demonstrates how to design an original costume design for a stylized ancient Egyptian guard inspired by scarab beetle shapes ▶



The Artist



Baldi Konijn

baldi-konijn.artstation.com

Software Used:

Photoshop

Baldi Konijn is a freelance concept artist from the Netherlands currently working for Riot Games. His focus tends to be on creating stylized character and creature designs.

Learn how layer effects can be used to enhance the focal points of your works...

This tutorial will be about creating a fantasy costume and character design with an Egyptian theme. From the moment I receive the brief I start playing with the idea of a scarab beetle style guard or a royal guard with scarab beetles engraved into his armor, or something along those lines. Another thing I want to focus on is the slavery aspect of it. I imagine a guy who is “chained to his duties.” So he is still a slave even though he has worked his way up to the royal guard status that he has now.

My goal here is to give this character style, form and depth which will create an appealing design. I also want the character to evoke some story or narrative background.

01 Exploring possibilities: I look up various reference images to get a feel for the ancient Egyptian culture, shape language, materials and colors. This will help me play around with more ideas. Sometimes I dive straight in and sketch out a few ideas that have popped-up immediately, but as soon as those ideas run dry I go to my references again.

With these sketches I focus mainly on creating cool shapes and ideas. Keeping the sketches very loose and quick helps me generate more ideas and gets me in the flow of things to come.

02 Consolidated sketches: Combining the elements I like from the previous spread I sketch a more consolidated design. I love the big back piece as it sort of resembles a scarab beetle. I also provide the underlying anatomy to make sure the armor at least looks sort of like it could work in practice.

The sketch is still very rough but it gives me enough information to start working out a final design if I am to continue in this direction. For these sketches I just use the regular Round brush that comes with Photoshop.

03 Anatomy and clean lines: I love creating stylized stuff; making a design chunky, strong and bold is a big part of the fun for me. But going for a stylized design does not exempt you from knowing your anatomy. It is



Figuring out what works for you and what doesn't is a big part of the fun when designing characters

01



With a better understanding of what you want to create, draw a more consolidated sketch

02

important to understand human and animal anatomy before you start to bend it and stylize it.

Making bold, confident strokes with your pen also helps with getting cleaner lines. I play a lot with sharp edges and contrasting big shapes with thin shapes.

04 Armor design: Now that I have worked out the underlying anatomy I can create the line art for my costume design. There are still some things that could change, for instance the boots and straps, but overall I am happy with the silhouette of this guard. I also try to incorporate more scarab beetle elements into the design of the armor as I feel they tie the design together. I decide not to give the guard a helmet or sword to keep the flow of the design going uninterrupted.

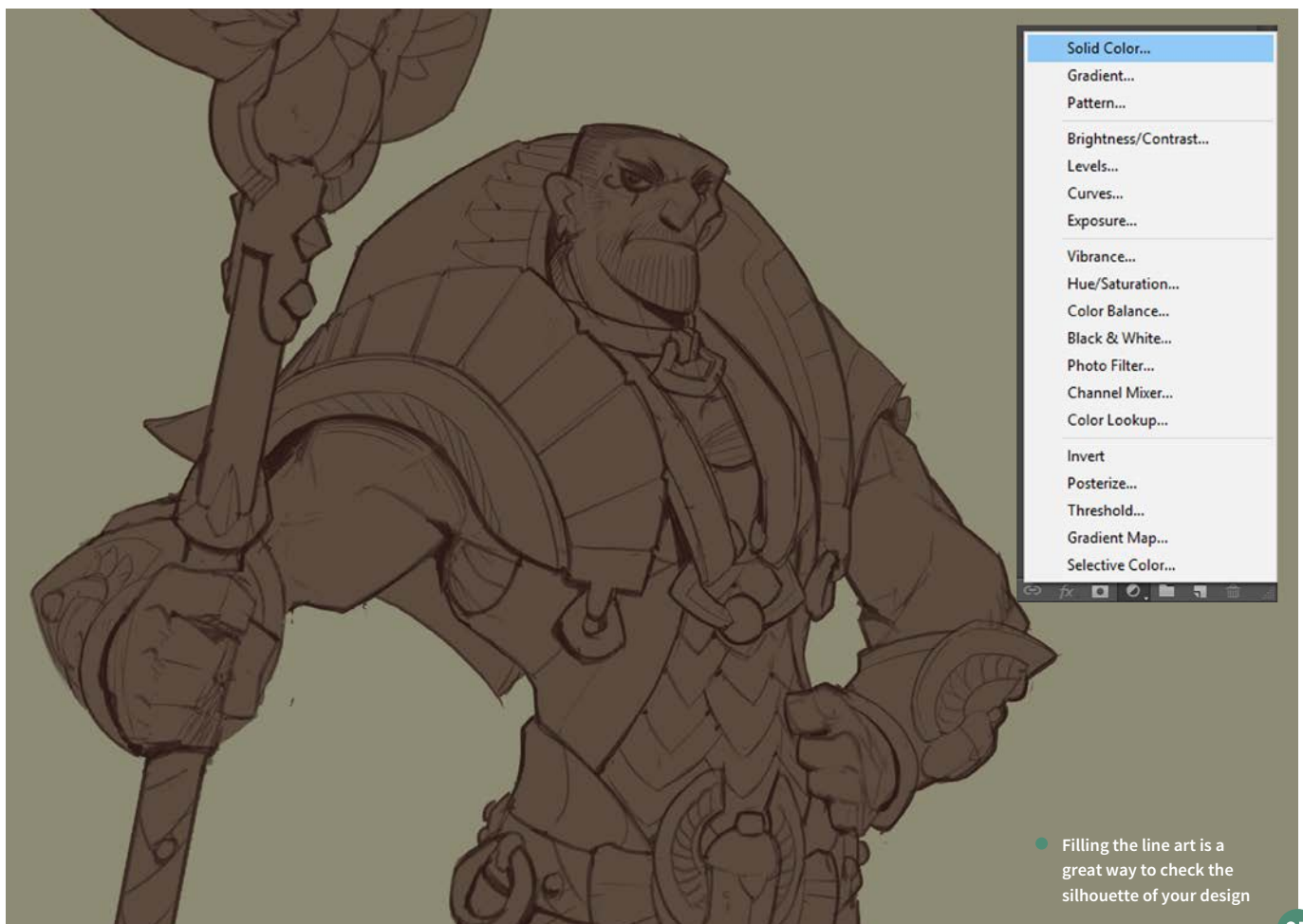
05 Color fills: I decide to change the armor on the character's legs. I feel like this new armor looks more solid and cool. I also add a big cloth piece on the back of the costume in the hope of solidifying his silhouette some more. Now that the line art is done I can color fill it. ►



03



04



05

I use the Magic Wand to select all the space outside of the line art. Then I press Ctrl+Shift+I to invert the selection. After this I use a Solid Color adjustment layer which automatically makes a mask of my selection on this color fill layer.

06 **Playing with color:** I create a new layer for every different color and clip them to the color fill layer from the last step. This means that the mask from the fill layer also applies to all the newly clipped layers. I like bold colors but it is important to balance them out with muted colors. This way your

saturated colors will come out more powerfully! I lay down all the different materials, and then I change the colors of every layer until I find a combination that works for me. This can also be used to create lots of quick color thumbnails.

07 **Shadows:** Now that I have settled on my colors I want to give form to my design. I start by creating a white layer on top of everything and paint in the shadows with the regular Soft Round brush. You'll notice that I give my shadows a little bit of color.

This will make my shadows later look less dull and, depending on which color I choose, they will either be warm or cold. When I am done I put this layer above everything else and set it to Multiply.

08 **Color Dodge layer:** I create some quick and easy highlights with a Color Dodge layer on top of all the other layers to give all the materials some specular highlights.

Note that materials like leather have a different specularity than gold for instance, so make sure to look up some references for your materials. Having a Multiply layer for the ►

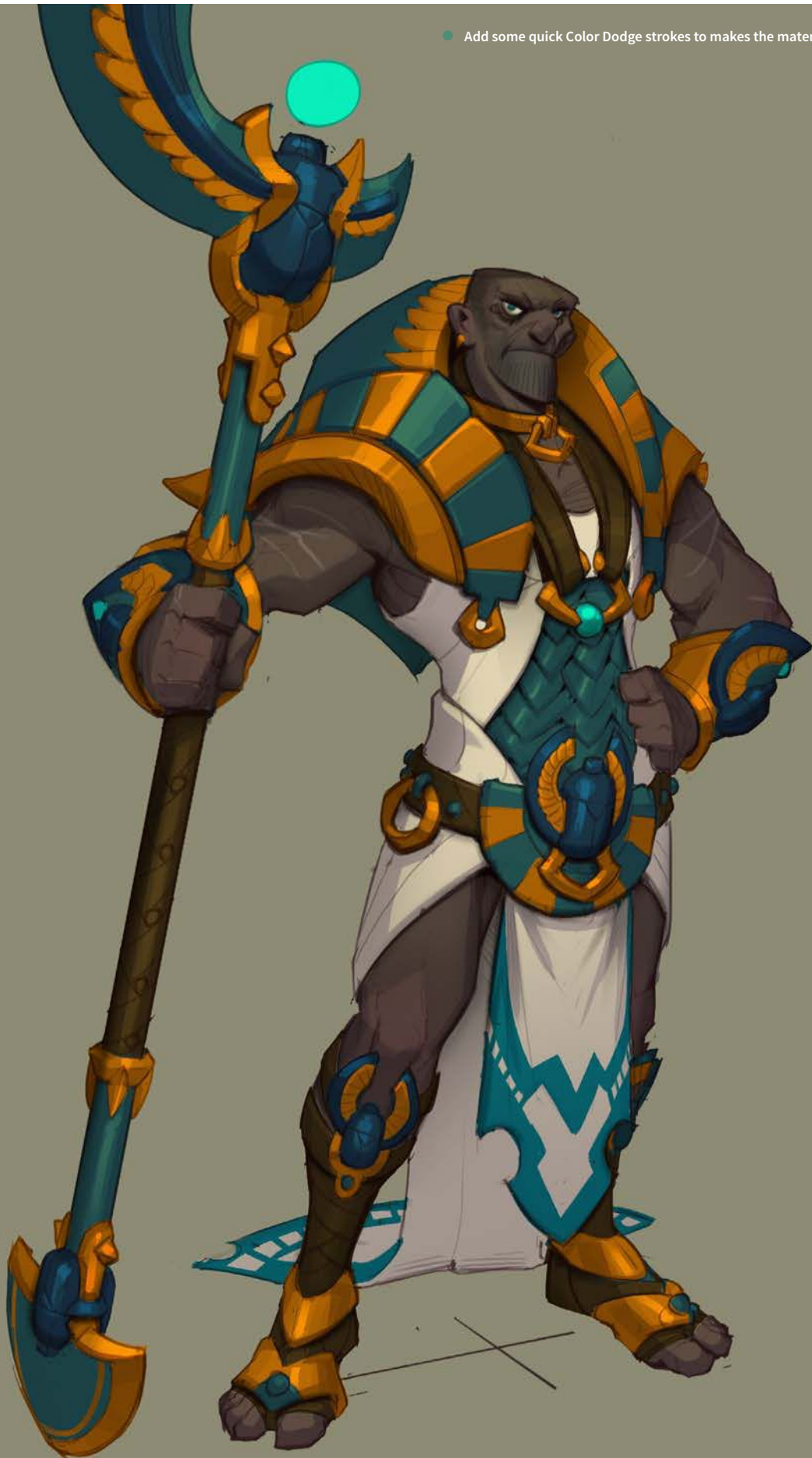


06



07

● Add some quick Color Dodge strokes to makes the materials stand out



shadows and a Color Dodge or Overlay layer for the highlights is a very easy and quick way to make those forms stand out a bit better!

They can also be used as a focal point, but do not overdo it. Keep the tonal differences subtle.

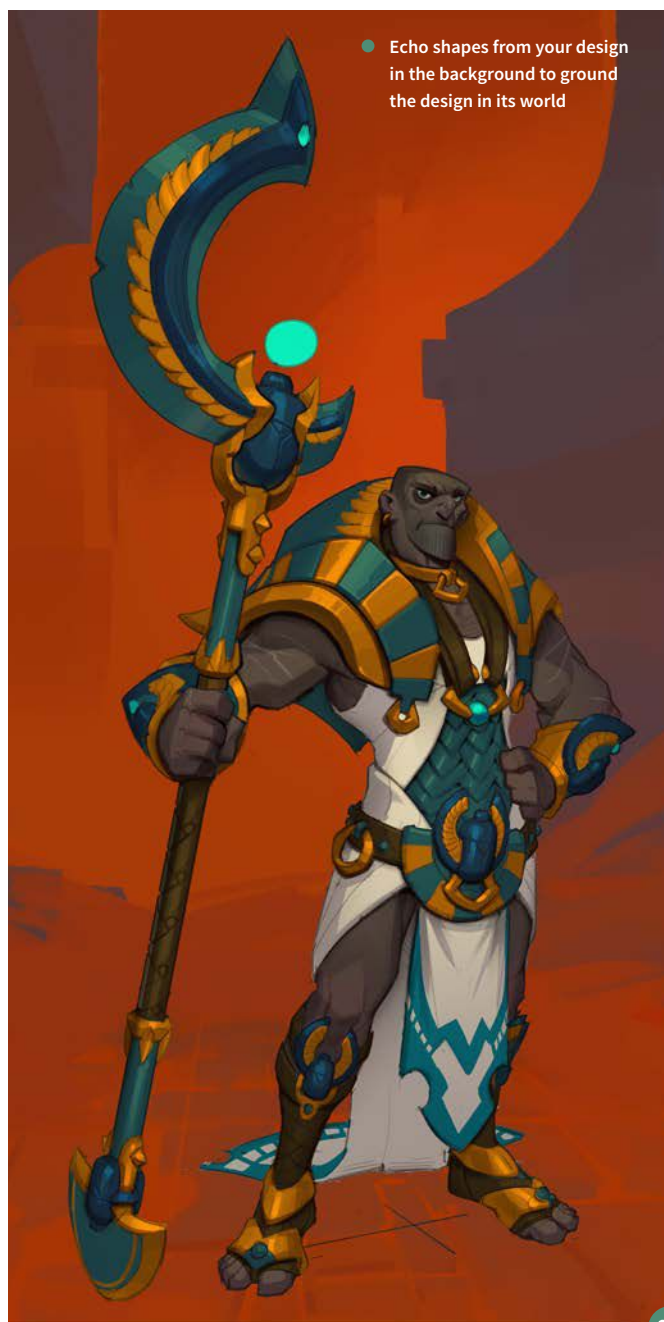
09 Merge and add a background: I lower the Opacity of my line art to 75% and make it a subtle red color to give a bit more life to the whole image. At this point I feel like all the layers are working against me so I merge everything into a single layer on which I will paint the rest of the character. Because I want to present this character better I decide to make some really fast graphical shapes as a

background. I echo shapes like his weapon in the background which ties it all together nicely.

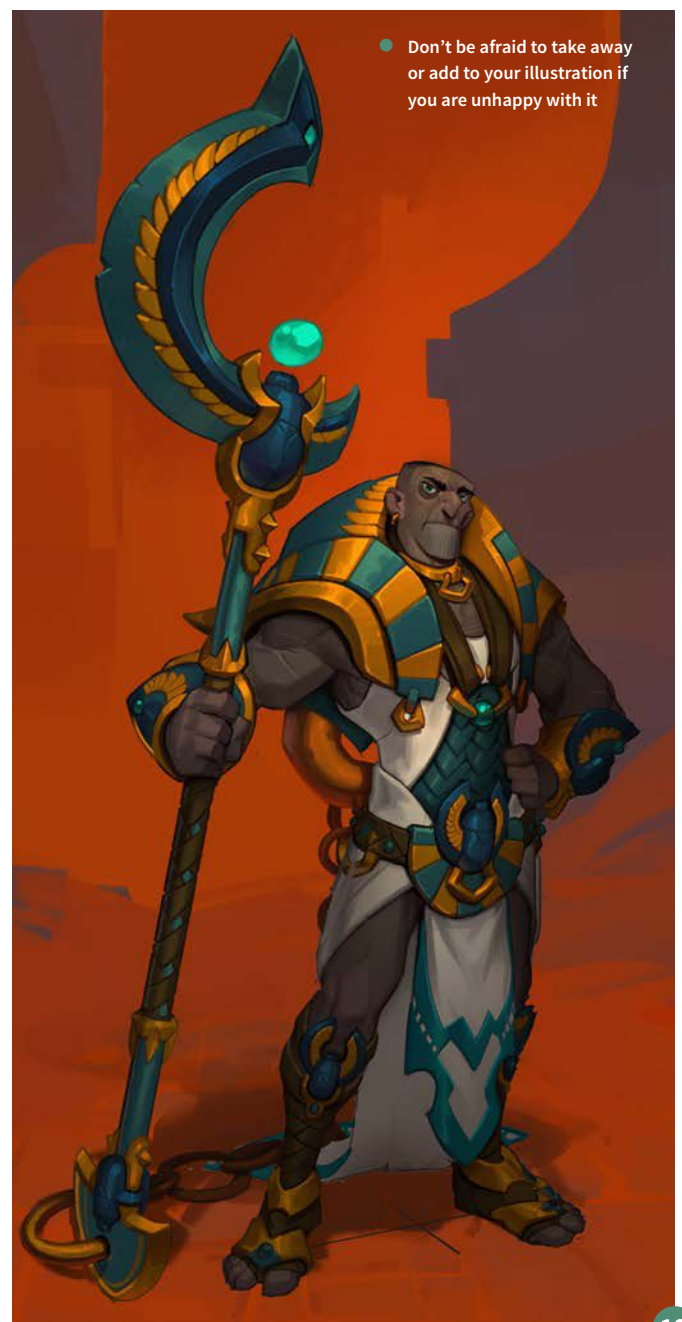
10 Creating a focal point: With big soft brushes I create some darker areas which don't want to detract from the main focus. At this point I feel like the guard is still a bit boring so I decide to add a chain running from his back to his weapon. This reinforces my idea that he is literally chained to his purpose.

I also start brushing over my line art and create a focal point around the guard's head and back armor. Adding the cast shadow helps to ground him in this illustration further. I also use a bit of Liquify to make minor changes to his proportions.

11 Finishing up: By adding bounced light and rim light I tie my character into the background some more. As a final touch I decide to change his robe as it is conflicting with the chain a bit too much. I also do some final, very subtle, changes with the Color Balance tool to make colors a bit more vivid. Do not forget to check your values to see if it all reads well and if your focal point works as intended. ●



09



10

The Artist



Baldi Konijn

baldi-konijn.artstation.com





Paint a futuristic huntress

Follow Amir Zand's process of continuous refinement to develop a classic character in a futuristic fantasy scene ▶





The Artist



Amir Zand (San)
artstation.com/artist/amirzand

Software Used:
Photoshop

Amir Zand is a freelance digital artist and illustrator specializing in cover art and promotional illustration. His works are also included in Digital Painting Techniques volumes 7 and 8.

Find imaginative new ways to reinvent elements of a traditional character...

This tutorial is about learning how to recreate an ancient character, in this case the Greek goddess Artemis, in a modern scene with a combination of fantasy and sci-fi elements. This artwork is purely based on my take of Artemis, but I will take some inspiration from her symbols, and transform them into a new version. The main focus of this tutorial will be on the main character and her armor.

Based on my research and the initial concept of Artemis that I have in my mind, I know that my artwork is going to be about a female hunter with a bow and arrow. She hunts in the moonlight, and her favorite target is deer. What I didn't know before my research is that she represents a strong and independent woman. I will try my best to translate this in my scene and in the character design.

This tutorial is also about my own personal techniques. It's about how I start a painting, and how I transform an image into the final artwork. I hope that as a result you will learn some tips that you'll find useful for achieving the results that you want.

01 Ideas and sketches: Before starting the painting, I do a few quick doodles to understand the composition and the pose of my character. It doesn't have to be a perfect sketch to end up as the final painting; it is just a quick way to get a better understanding of the overall artwork. I start sketching over my blank page to fill it up with ideas.

I want to avoid giving Artemis a sexual appeal; I want to create a warrior that is attractive, but not because of a sexy dress. I want her to be impressive on her own without having to rely on her sexuality. Artemis is a representation of a strong and admirable woman, and I have to

avoid something which is a norm in the industry in order to give her a different look as a warrior.

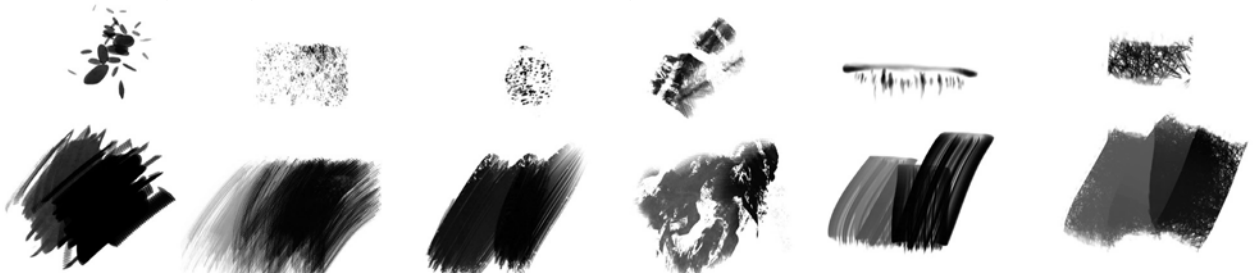
As you can see in the image 01, I design an A, B and C while thinking whether I would like to go for a dynamic pose or a static one. I personally prefer static poses, and I realize that a static pose would better represent a strong character such as Artemis.

I like the static pose in sketch A because it looks like a Greek statue, but I feel that it looks too simple for my purpose, so I decide to mix it with elements of B, such as the angled upper body and head.



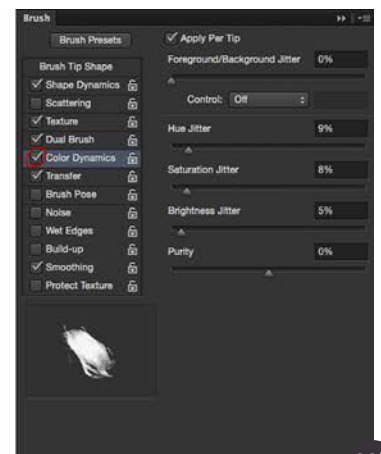
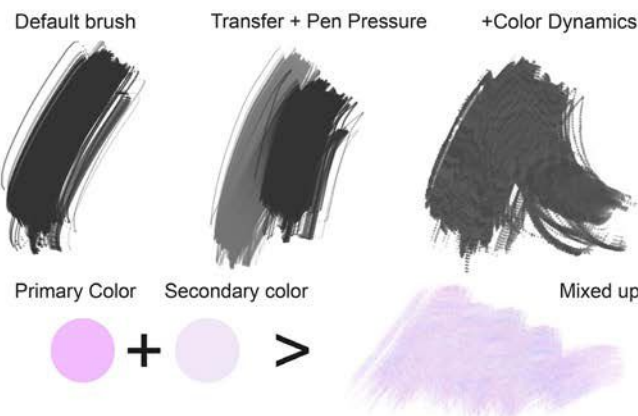
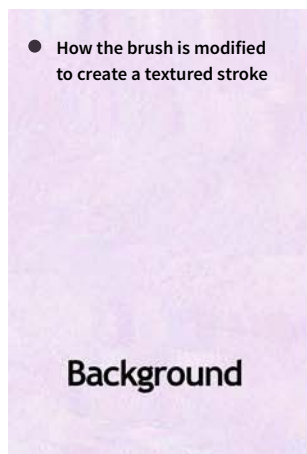
01

- These brushes are spongy and rough, the strokes are similar to traditional painting



02a

- How the brush is modified to create a textured stroke



02b

02 The toolkit: I always use Photoshop with a certain brush set that I gather from the internet. I modify some of them to fulfill my need. The brushes in image 02a are in Transfer and Shape Dynamics mode. I will paint most of the background based on a modified brush, using Color Dynamics mode.

In image 02b you can see how I modify it into a Color Dynamics brush using the Brush Presets and then use it to fill the background. I prefer not to use any texture for this artwork, and keep painting with the same brush.

03 Shaping up the background: Now I divide the background into three parts (ground, mid-ground, and background). I make sure that everything is prepared for the appearance of the main character. The background is made using a single layer. I do not use an eraser, I only pick colors from my color palette and use my spongy brush to refine the background to my liking. This is the technique that I use for most of my paintings.

04 Character appearance: Based on the previous sketches, I paint my character with the chosen static pose, and add a few touches to the foreground so the character is prepared for adding further details later. I don't use a clean line sketch for my work. I paint the character by adding my initial sketch and then refining it until I get the result that I want. The character keeps evolving throughout the painting process and you will see these changes as this tutorial continues. It may not seem perfect at first, but it will keep getting better. This refining technique is my way of creating an artwork, and it is close to a traditional way of painting, or even sculpting. ►



PRO TIPS Work with your mistakes

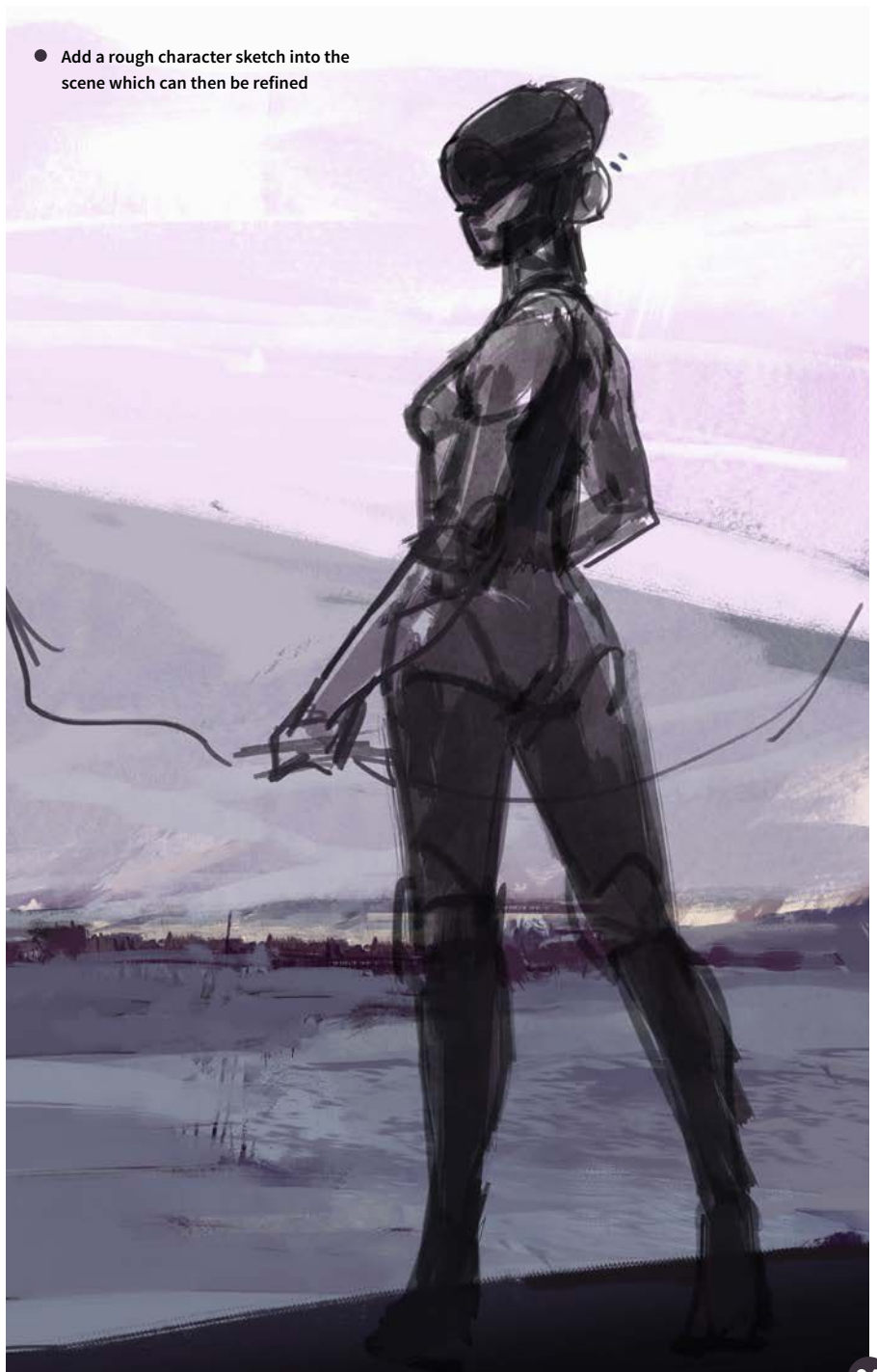
From time to time, I flatten my image to reduce the number of layers, and I try not to use the Undo feature. If I do make a mistake, I try correcting it by painting further over it. This might lead to some positive residues in your artwork that adds a better overall feeling to it. It is a technique for taking advantage from your mistakes and accidents.

- The progress of the background which is split into three planes to create depth



03

- Add a rough character sketch into the scene which can then be refined



04



05

05 Refining the character: I start to refine my initial sketch and roughly paint over the figure in a grayscale color palette. I then continue by designing the helmet, add the base for the bow and refine the hand and arm by adding skin colors.

Next I paint the face and add a glass to the helmet which covers the face, as well as some small details to the armor. I exaggerate the length of the legs to make my character a natural runner that can chase after her targets when hunting. It also helps to add a fantasy feel to the artwork.

06 Costume and color adjustments: I add more detail to the character's armor (the shoulders, hands and back to be specific) by dividing the surface with a small brush. I then paint shadows on the divided surfaces in a darker color. I create some ribbons using the Lasso tool (image 06a) which turn into a cape as I over-paint it. The trick is to draw some random lines using the Lasso tool, then fill them with color and keep doing it until you get to the right shape.

After some refinement, I feel I want to change the mood of the artwork by adjusting the colors. By using the Color Balance tool under the Adjustments tab, I transform the mood of the image by making the shadows bluer and shifting the mid-tones toward green, and the highlights toward yellow. I use this adjustment



06a

- Use Color Balance to correct your colors and change the painting's mood



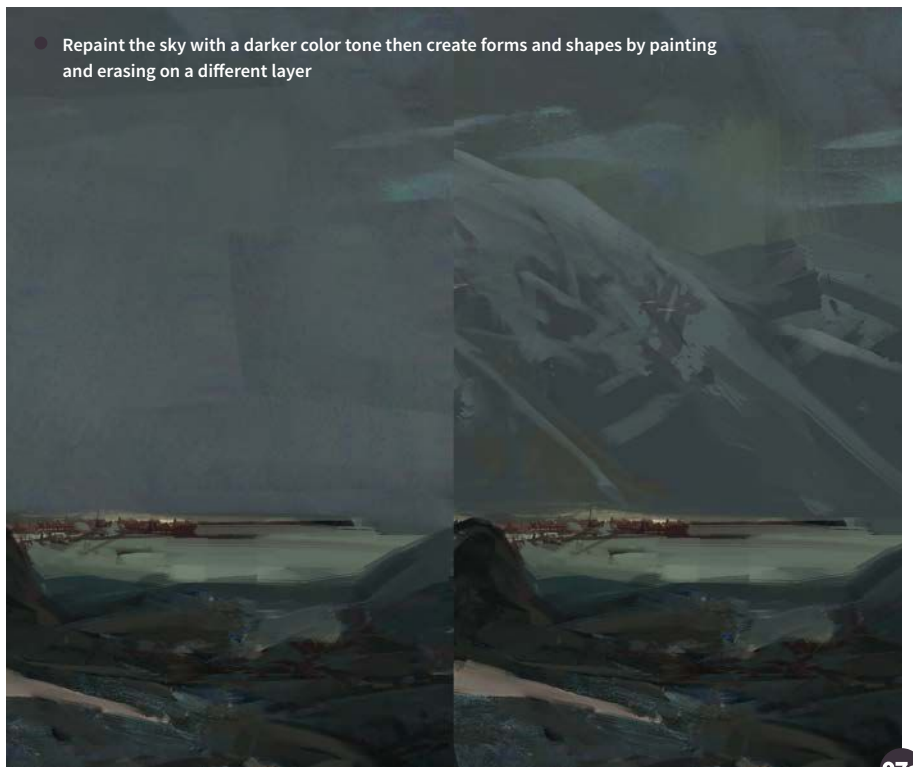
in order to refine my color palette from time to time. Finally, I add more details to the ground.

“I rework and repaint the sky with a new color palette to transform the scenery from daylight to night-time”

07 Refining the artwork: After a short break, I decide to change the mood of my painting further. In this case, I rework and re-paint the sky with a new color palette to transform the scenery from daylight to night-time. I want to fill the background with some shapes and forms. As you can see in image 07a, I create a new layer on top of the merged background and fill it with bright colors using my Color Dynamics brush.

I remove some parts of it with a spongy Eraser brush in order to get the results I want in the form of clouds and fog in the background. ►

- Repaint the sky with a darker color tone then create forms and shapes by painting and erasing on a different layer



Then I bring the character back in and modify her hand to change the way she holds the bow and arrow. Lastly, I recreate the helmet by removing the glass to reveal more of the character's face which helps to create a more feminine look.

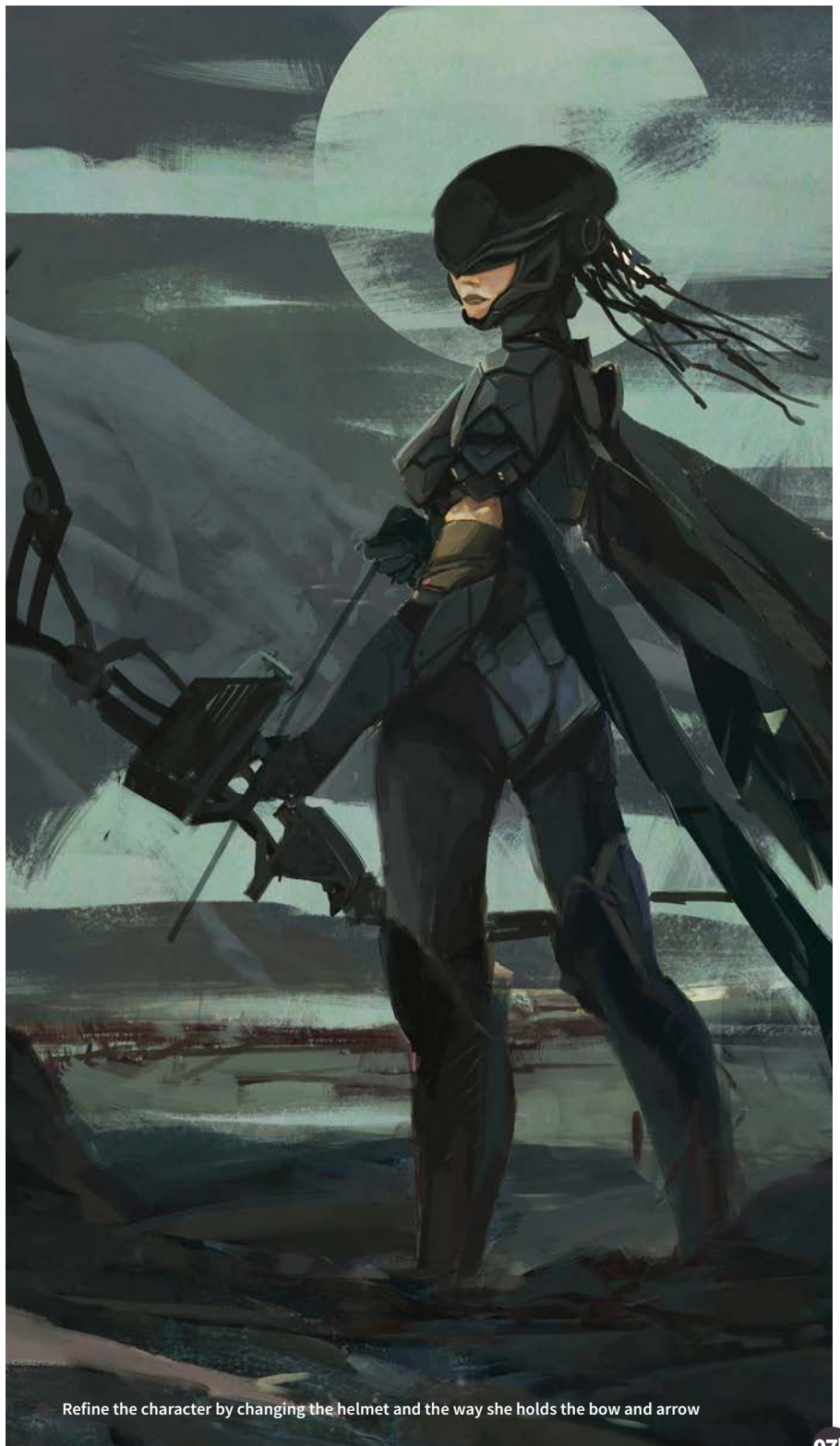
08 Adjustments and helmet design: This step is all about details and adjustments. I am inspired by nature and symbols of Artemis to use elements such as branches, and deer horn to come up with a unique, fantasy helmet. I create many different helmets for my character until I am satisfied with this version. You can see the evolution of the helmet in image 08a.

I finalize different parts of the body (such as legs, overall armor, hand and head) by refining and adding more details. I add some fog and particles to the foreground and apply Motion Blur on them. Moreover, I increase the magenta and the red color of the mid-tone using the Color Balance tool to add a slightly warmer feel to the cold night.

It is better to avoid centering your focus on one area while neglecting the other parts. A better solution is to make progress on all areas at a steady pace, until you reach a point where some parts of the image do not require any more details. Then you can start focusing more on your subject.

“There are hunting dogs that follow Artemis around so I reinvent the dogs as futuristic, fantasy drones”

09 Polishing: Before I start rendering my adjustments and lightings I take some time off from working on the illustration, sometimes a day or two if there is time. When I get back to it, I flip the image to see it from a different perspective. It is as if you are looking at your illustration as a viewer, and not as an artist. It helps you to find the parts of the illustration that need reconsidering. Don't spend too much



Refine the character by changing the helmet and the way she holds the bow and arrow

07b



Progress of the helmet design changing to suit the character and mood better

08a

time working continuously on the artwork, and try to take a break from time to time. I decide to change the form of her lips to be in a different expression, and I adjust the way she holds the arrow with her fingers, the height of the arrow, as well as the angle of the bow itself. I care a lot about the hands as they need to be characterized. Lastly, I'm making the moon behind her bigger.

I feel that I need to add something else to the illustration, and I have read that there are hunting dogs that follow Artemis around so I reinvent the dogs as futuristic, fantasy drones. Using the Selection tool, I create a circle area and fill it with the Gradient tool to correct the lights and shadows. I make a copy of the drone and repeat it, moving the two new drones to places that balance the composition. I apply Motion Blur so it's like they are tracking a hunt. I also make the background a bit wider by using the Crop tool, and Scale tool to make it fit with my new crop.

10 Rendering: Once the artwork is complete in terms of the details and corrections, it's time to apply the final adjustments. Now this is the most amazing part of my paintings, this is where all the magic happens. I want to create an eye-catching scene and make it as magical as I can.

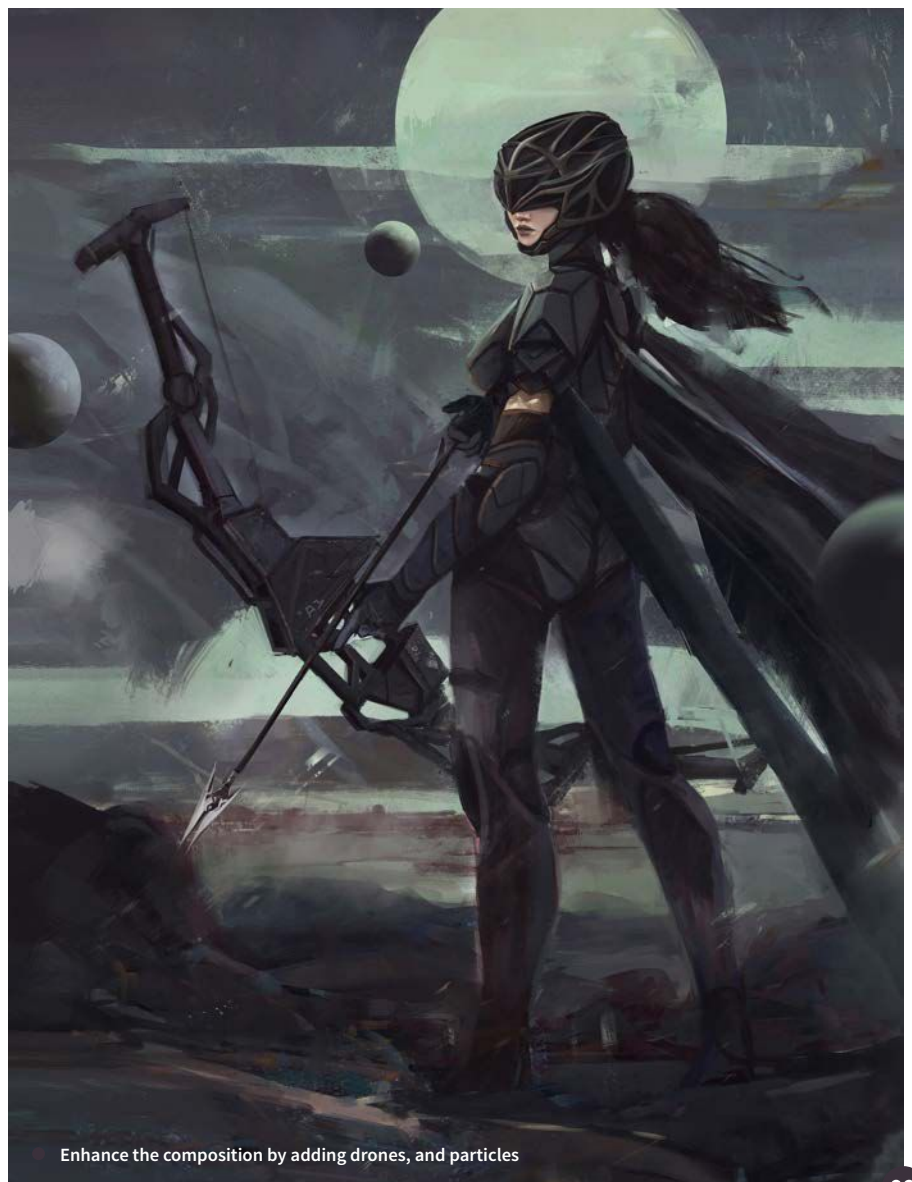
I begin with the overall lighting, by adding light to the moon, surface of the ground and around my character with a soft round brush using the Overlay layer mode. I continue adding highlights to the surfaces of the armor using the Dodge tool with a soft round brush. This simulates the reflection of the moonlight which helps the character to stand out. I also add extra highlights to the helmet, bow, arrow and the drones. I use the Burn tool (with the same soft round brush) to darken the shadows, creating a better contrast.

Now I refine the face and desaturate it to match the environment lighting and I also increase the saturation of the whole artwork to make it slightly more vibrant. Lastly I use the Sharpen tool to make the details standout. My illustration is ready to sign. ●



After further refinement, more fog is added and Color Balance is used

08b



Enhance the composition by adding drones, and particles

09



The Artist

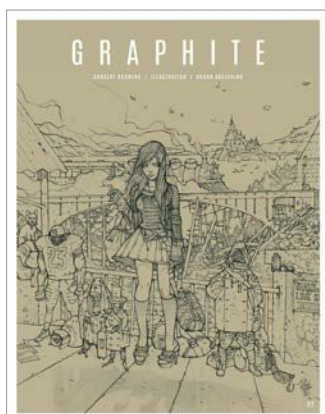
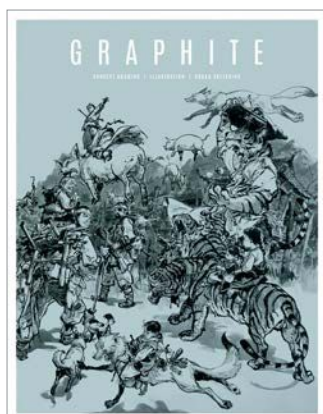


Amir Zand (San)
[artstation.com/artist/
amirzand](https://artstation.com/artist/amirzand)

GRAPHITE

GRAPHITE is a quarterly publication featuring inspirational artwork, interviews, and tutorials on drawing, sketching, and illustration. Each issue features content by an eclectic mix of industry professionals and talented newcomers, including illustrators, urban sketchers, concept designers, and comic artists. GRAPHITE's focus on traditional media, elegant presentation, and in-depth resources makes it a timelessly valuable addition to any art lover's shelf.

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Creating vivid sci-fi scenes

Jung-Hoon Lee explains his organized process for creating the vibrant sci-fi scene *Moon* ▶

All images © Jung-Hoon Lee

The Artist



Jung-Hoon Lee

artstation.com/artist/hoon

Software Used:

Photoshop

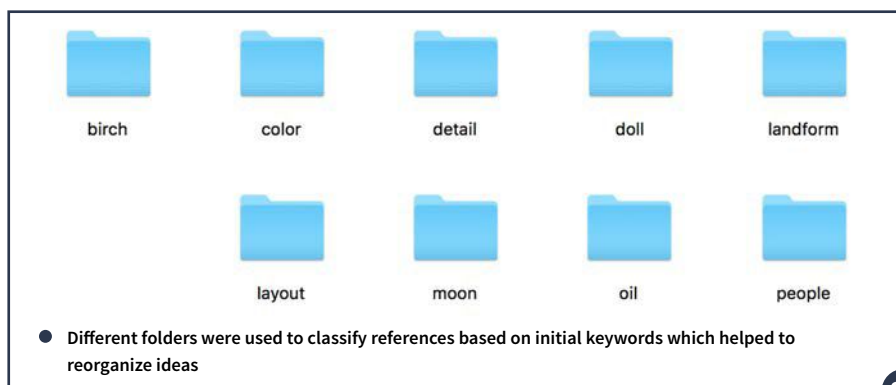
Jung-Hoon Lee is an environment concept artist from South Korea. He has worked in the game industry for sixteen years and currently works as the Lead Concept Artist at NetEase.



See how a structured approach to references and thumbnails helped to refine ideas...

When I get started on a new concept art piece, I generally begin with a few keywords which I either come up with myself or are provided by clients. Then I start searching for references upon these keywords to make more specific and developed images, which I then group together as a brand new image. For the following work, I started with the keywords of “moon” and “mysteriousness.”

01 Searching for references: Firstly, I found ideas and images relating to the keywords. I personally take this process as the most important one because the

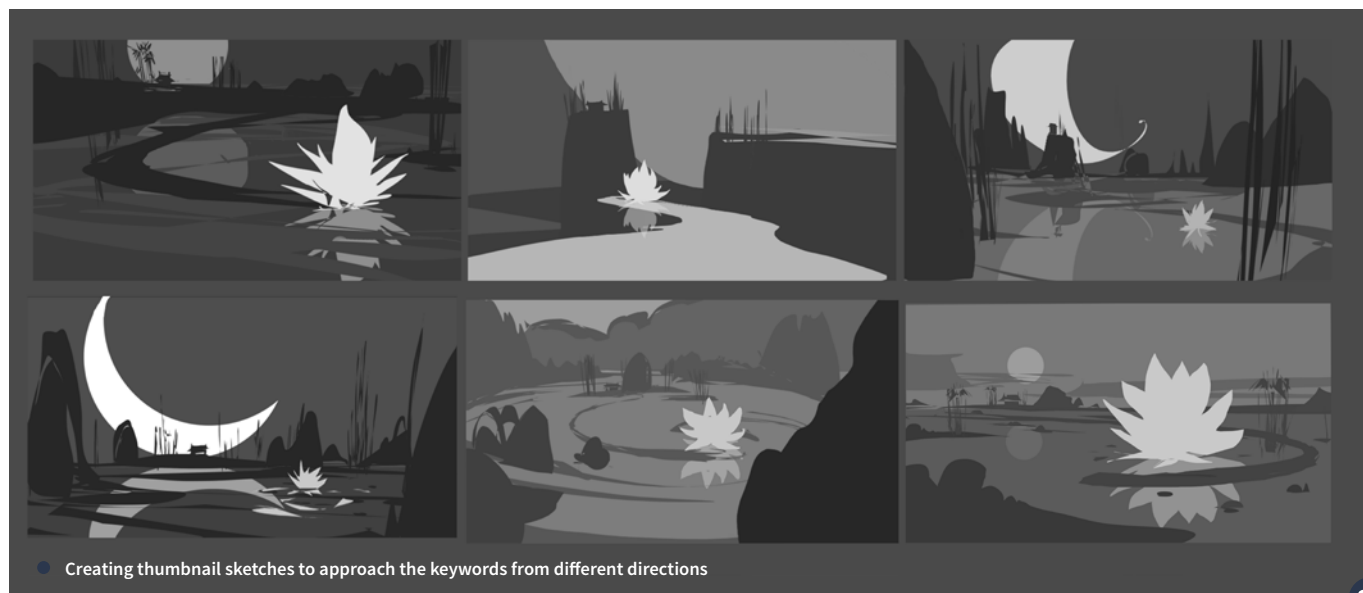


01

concept becomes more profound, and a more specific image shapes in my mind.

Then I checked the purpose and function of each reference by reorganizing them into folders. For example in this work I reorganized references

into folders by layout, people, oil, detail, color, moon, landform and birch. These references would be a great help when I proceeded with the rest of the process. If other references are needed in later processes, I searched again and added them into the folders.



● Creating thumbnail sketches to approach the keywords from different directions

02



● Explaining images only in silhouettes avoids focusing on textures and details

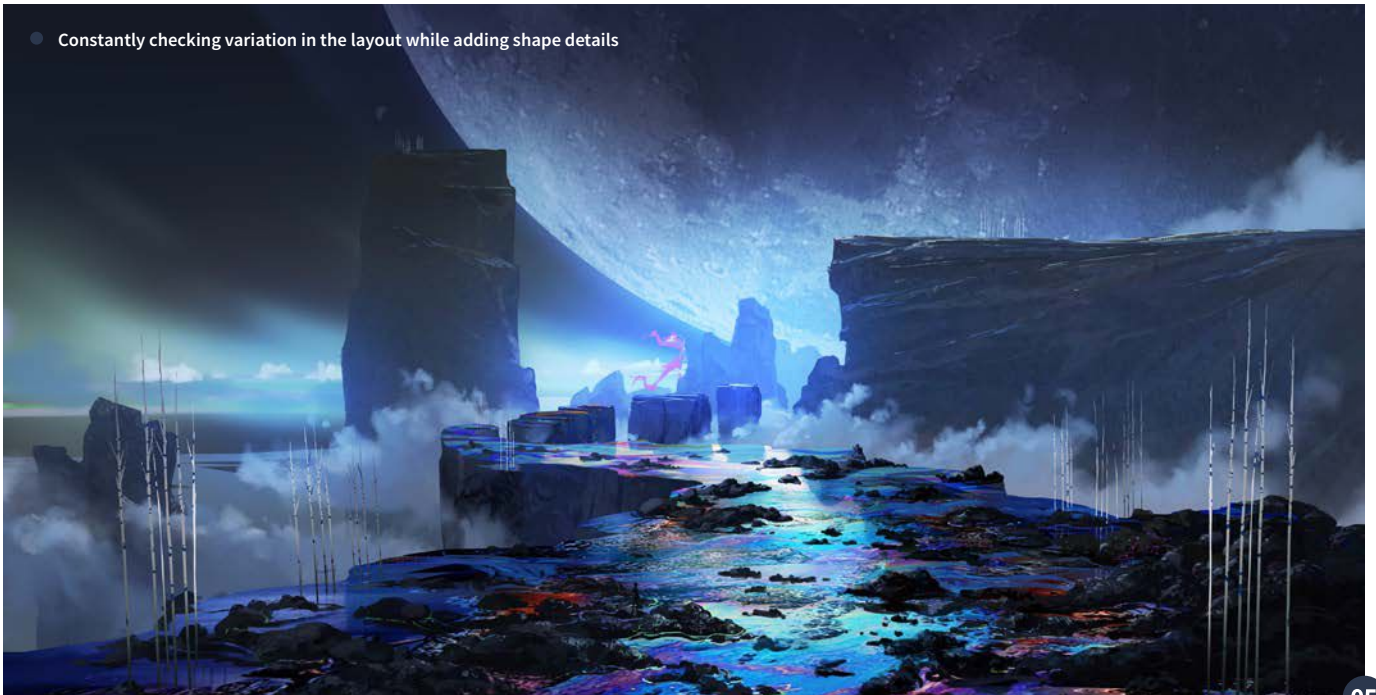
03

● Using the Color layer function to apply basic colors



04

● Constantly checking variation in the layout while adding shape details



05

“I usually do line sketches or use the Lasso tool to create thumbnails because I can modify them very quickly”

02 Creating thumbnail sketches:

Next I created thumbnail sketches in accordance with those references. Generally I will create four or more thumbnail sketches for each image. This allows me to approach the keywords from various directions and make the image more profound as well. I usually do line sketches or use the Lasso tool to create thumbnails because I can modify

them very quickly. For this step, I mainly focused on the layout of each image.

03 Developing thumbnail sketches:

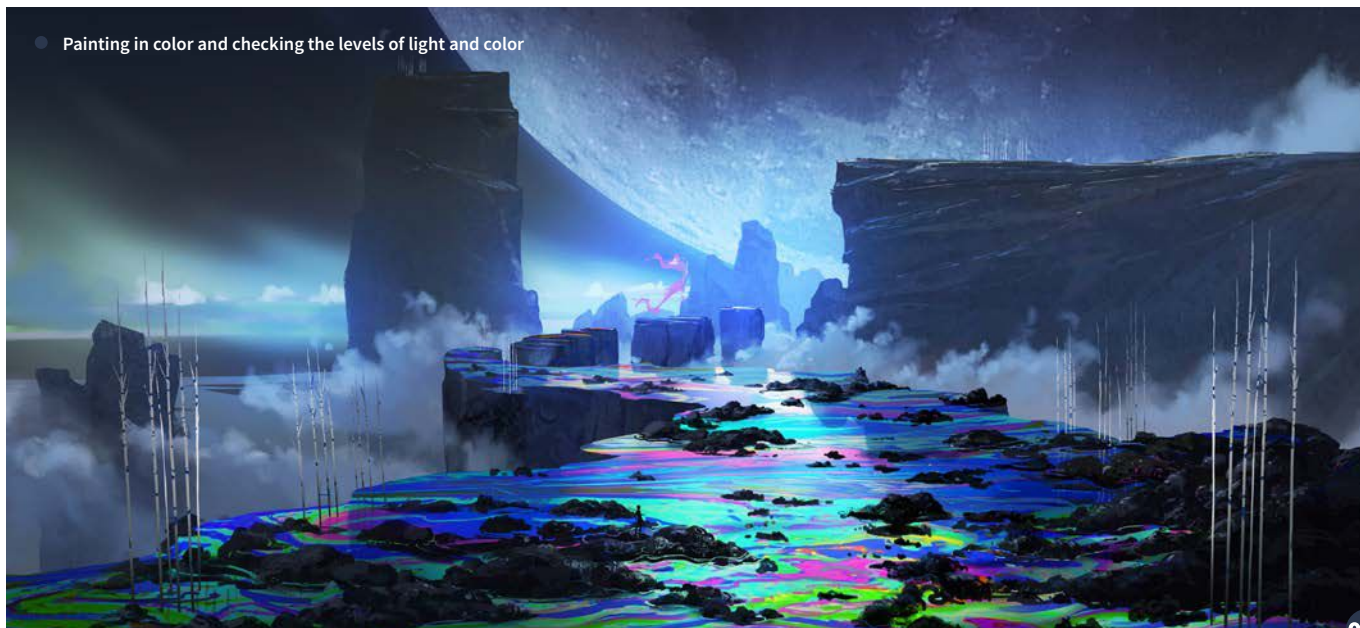
I wanted to depict those simple thumbnail sketches in a more specific way. I tried to explain the image with only silhouettes, and avoid focusing on details and textures.

Here, I upgraded the quality of those thumbnail sketches by putting them on one screen. I made sure that the degree of completion was balanced. I did this is to avoid quality differences which draw attention away from the ideas.

04 Picking a thumbnail sketch: I picked one thumbnail sketch from the group and put it on a big screen. Then I put basic colors on it. At this point, I used Photoshop's Color layer mode to apply basic colors which were already decided from my color references.

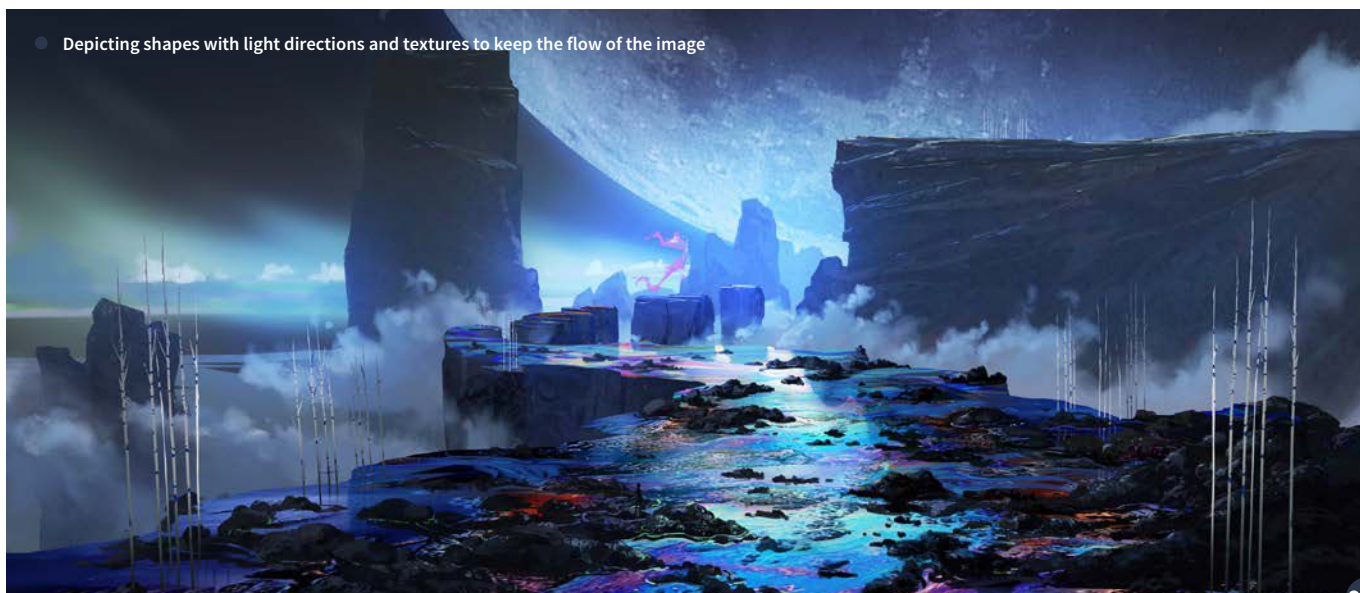
05 Depicting details: I constantly checked the variation of the layout while adding in the details of the shapes. I also always made sure that the flow of the shapes were pointing at the focal point of the image and kept adjusting it. ►

- Painting in color and checking the levels of light and color



06a

- Depicting shapes with light directions and textures to keep the flow of the image



06b

- Checking distances between each element to see if there was an appropriate energy flow



07

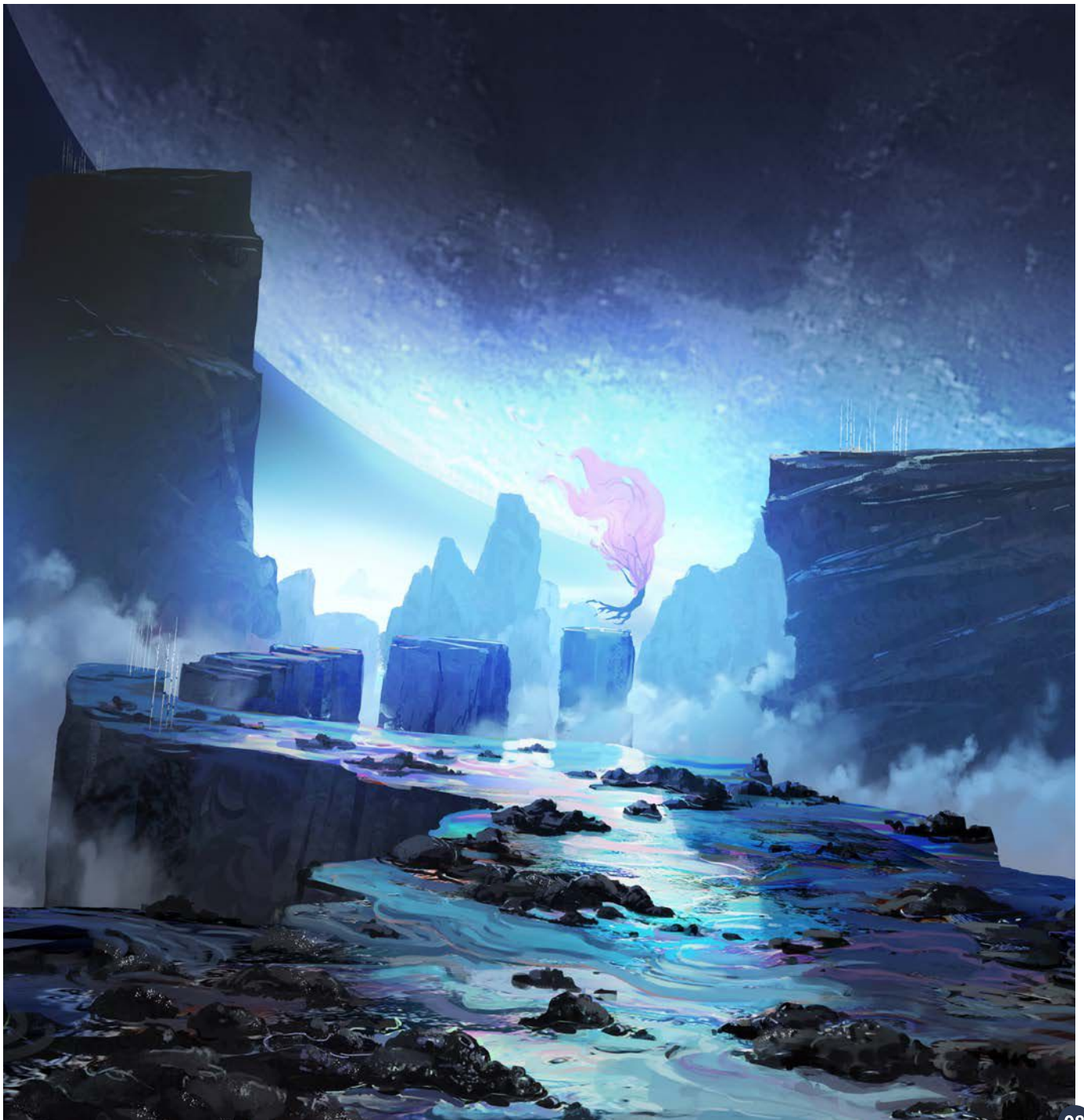
06 Specifying textures: Since the current layout would not change much from this point, I started to depict the textures more clearly. Both colors and lights become more specified as you depict textures, so at this point, I needed to make sure that the level of light and color would help to keep the whole flow of the image.

“The contrast of saturation and brightness in the foreground was way too high to draw attention to the focal point”

07 Checking the layout: Now basically all of the essential elements were depicted. So I checked the distances between each element and the strength of the colors to make sure there was an appropriate flow of energy in the image.

I found that the current flow was too quiet, so I decided to twist the space a little bit to add some vividness. Meanwhile, the contrast of saturation and brightness in the foreground was way too high to draw attention to the focal point. So I modified that as well.

08 Finishing: To finish I checked if the whole balance and color use were appropriate. Then I check if there were any elements that hindered the main theme that I wanted to be expressed. And then finally I finished it by organizing my Photoshop layers. ●





The Artist



Jung-Hoon Lee

artstation.com/artist/hoon





beginner's guide to
digitalpainting
in photoshop

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO DIGITAL
PAINTING IN PHOTOSHOP:

Painting over grayscale

by Eric Spray

Discover how Eric Spray brings his grayscale painting to life by creating custom shapes and custom brushes in Photoshop, as well using photos to enhance detail ▶

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The Artist



Eric Spray

ericspray.blogspot.co.uk

Software Used:

Photoshop

Eric Spray is an artist and Art Director based in Wisconsin, USA. His projects include *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare*, *Call of Duty: Black Ops I, II and III*, and *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*.



My painting process generally starts in one of two ways. Sometimes I start with a value (black and white) sketch and apply color later with the use of brushes and Color layers. The other technique I often use is to start painting in color and develop the idea throughout the process of painting. I was trained as an illustrator, so the value sketch is the way I am most accustomed to working. However, working day to day as a concept artist I use the latter approach, simply because it is a quicker way of working.

Value sketches

For the sake of this tutorial, and because it is a good technique for a beginner to learn, I decided to start with a value sketch (Fig.01). This first stage is simply the point where you should work on the composition and narrative for the image. I spent roughly 30 minutes creating my black and white sketch. I suggest that you try to spend a similar amount of time on this step. At this point you are free to adjust shapes and points of interest rapidly. My image changed repeatedly throughout this process until I was happy with what I had. I used a textured brush to create the sketch. You can use any brush you choose however.



Layers

After you are happy with the value sketch the next step is to work directly over the image on a new layer with color (Fig.02). I think it's important to mention at this point that I was working with the image zoomed in somewhere between 50-100%. Some people zoom further into the image, but I think you will find it easier to evaluate the image as a whole if you keep it at more of a distance. An alternate way you could work is to open a duplicate of the image. Under the Window tab there is an option called Arrange. In this tab there is a special feature called New Window that will reveal a mirror copy of your current work file. The great thing about this feature is that it constantly updates whichever version you work on.

At this point in my image I added two new layers: one set to Color and the other to Overlay to paint in to. To clarify, a Color layer does not affect the value, it only affects the intensity of the color and the hue. A layer set to Overlay multiplies and heightens the lights and darks. Don't feel like you need to use much finesse at this stage since you are only really trying to introduce color and show some depth.

Making corrections

I guess it's important to note that I don't really think about the individual steps while I'm painting. Even though I'm breaking down my process into clear steps to better explain how I work, in truth a painting to me only has a beginning, middle and end. My painting teacher in college coined this phrase so I won't be taking credit for it. In Fig.03 you can see that I started to make some adjustments at this stage. I removed the character and corrected the over-exaggerated three point perspective on the door/wall. This is the ideal point for you to make changes like this. It is much easier for you to correct any problems at this early stage than later when you are adding detail. Once you are happy, however, you can start to model the existing forms and add shapes.

You will notice that I removed my character at this stage. I did this because I find that it makes it easier to focus on making sure the background is correct. I would suggest doing this yourself. If any of the features of your image are distracting, remove them until you are happy with the overall image.



The importance of a silhouette

At this point the design of my robot was a little inconclusive and vague. To remedy this I used a technique that you might find very useful. I selected the robot with the Lasso tool and took a look at its overall shape and silhouette. I can't stress enough how important silhouettes are. We look at and judge the silhouette and shape of an object very quickly so it is vital that we give it appropriate consideration. I would encourage any painter to be constantly aware of the silhouette they commit to.

Adjusting shapes

Another thing to remember is to adjust shapes as you progress. At this stage I was working on individual parts of the image and as I did so I adjusted the shape of the features repeatedly. It's important to note that every time you make a new adjustment you should make an updated version of the selected area.

To do this go to the Select tab and click Save Selection. This is a good habit to get into because you can re-select your previous version and stretch and pull it to adjust it however you like. Meaning you don't have to repeat the process and therefore save time.

In Fig.04 you can see that I was still adjusting and arranging shapes within the composition. I started to introduce a variety of brush sets, as well introduce some texture with some textured brushes. I also started to juxtapose warm and cool colors on surfaces. I would suggest still keeping fairly loose at this point in a painting as you don't want to overcommit too early in the painting process.

Bringing the machine to life

Fig.05 is a continuation of the same process. Making a character or item seem weighty or heavy is something you may find difficult to do. I wanted to make sure that the machine's ▶

posture was convincing and made him look heavy. The way I solved this problem was to rectifying the perspective of the ground and to adjust the legs a little. Using the selection trick I described earlier, I was able to grab the silhouette of the robot immediately and deselect the portions of the selections I did not want to adjust (everything above the waist in this case). In Lasso tool mode you can simply hold Alt to deselect in the same manner as you would not hold Alt to add to a selection.

With the new selection made I chose Distort under the Edit tab in the Transform section. Distort will create a generalized box around your selection that you can then stretch and distort to your liking. After you make an adjustment remember to save the new selection.

Atmospheric effects

The design at this point was starting to come along. I liked some of the forms that I'd started solidifying so I jumped on to more atmospheric effects (Fig.06 – 07). Lighting wise I knew that I wanted to keep my centre of interest dimly lit to suggest an ominous nature to the environment it exists within. The general idea is that the robot has been locked away for many years behind a large, industrial-sized barn. This would be its first reveal since it was used for warfare.



06



07



08

When painting atmospheric effects it's always good to go for the biggest brush you can with the fewest strokes possible. In the case of my image I added an Overlay layer to the top of my image. This Overlay layer allows you to heighten lights and deepen darks based on your color selection. If you choose a relatively bright color (in value) the lights will become brighter as will the darks. Consequently, choosing a dark color will deepen the intensity of the darks. As you progress in your image the changes become smaller and smaller, but I was still working at the macro level. Details are simply additions to a good design and are far less important than the image as a whole (Fig.08).

Adding a photograph

So wrapping up this tutorial I thought I would share one final trick I sometimes use in my paintings. I have no problem using photos in my work, as long as I adjust them up to 50% and they are unrecognizable to the original source image. In this case I made a specific selection from a portion of a photograph of a modern day tank. On the far right side of Fig.09 you can see where I dropped the photo in. Using Transform I distorted the photo into perspective to run vertically along the width of the door. I set the photo as an Overlay layer to blend softly into what I'd already painted.

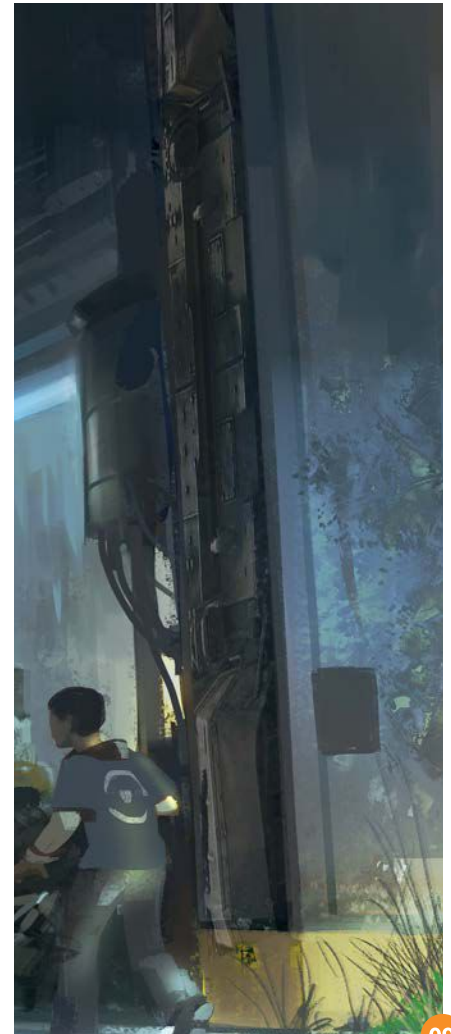
Finally in Fig.10 you can see I manually painted over the photo in an attempt to make the image more convincing and the photo unrecognizable from the original.

Adjusting levels

To conclude my painting I finished off with some subtle details and final lighting adjustments. I like to finish every painting by adjusting the entire image with Levels. In Levels (under the Image tab and Adjustments option) you are able to make value adjustments, as subtle or as intense as you would like. I like to stay in painting mode as long as possible and save the Levels and other broad adjustments to the very end.

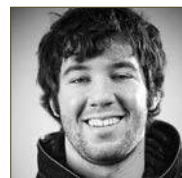
If I were to compare the process I paint with now to when I finished school the differences would be huge. I think that it's important for every artist to constantly evolve their way of working. When you find something that works remember it and use it, but don't assume that it is the solution to every problem.

Painting isn't easy and neither is modeling, but through practice and learning I've found that there's always a positive outcome in sight. Just stay positive and constantly work to improve yourself as an artist. ●





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